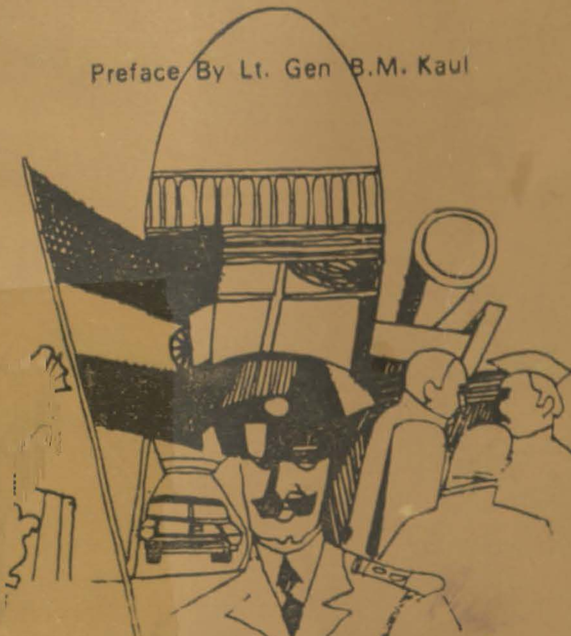
THE MOST SENSATIONAL BOOK OF THE YEAR

WITH TWO PRESIDENTS

A FASCINATING TALE BY

MAJOR C L DATTA

Preface By Lt. Gen B.M. Kaul



"There is something of everything in this volume : affairs of st
intrigue in high places, the drama of war, military humour, the
grandeur of the Raj" — Far Eastern Economic Review

WITH TWO PRESIDENTS

Major C. L. Datta *(Rtd)*

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Preface

Few young officers of the Defence Services have had the opportunity of serving as aide-de-camp to the President of India. I am one of those few. I held this privileged office from 1961 to 1963 when I was a Captain of the Guards. I had a double distinction. I was ADC to the first two Presidents of the Indian Republic. Living under the same roof, part of the same household, in very close contact both by day and night with the holder of the highest office in the land, an ADC, though a humble cog in the machine, is privileged to see and hear things that however trivial they may seem in themselves illuminate historic events and the persons involved in them.

Rashtrapati Bhavan to the lay mind is the place where with a stroke of the pen, dictated by the Government, the destiny of individuals and of the country as a whole is decided. Inside the House, as the members of the presidential staff call it, life is treated like a game of bridge. One tries to make the best of the cards, good or bad, dealt him. The House may be described as a whispering gallery, a place where rumours come in from many sources and influence opinion, and then out again magnified, diminished, distorted.

Presidents are no less intensely human when seen at close quarters than their subjects. One of the holders of this august office gathered astrologers round him to assure himself and members of his circle that he was predestined to die in harness. Another assembled a panel of doctors to assure the Government that he was fit for a second term.

This book is basically a compilation from a diary of events. It is an attempt to fashion a connected story out of certain happenings in the official residence of the Indian head of state

from January 1961 to November 1963. This was a very controversial period in the history of the newborn republic and my narrative might help shed some light on certain obscure patches.

Here let me hasten to add that I am not a historian. Nor does my book contain judgments on the events I have recorded and the people whose names figure in it. Its prime object is to entertain, to take the ordinary citizen behind the scenes and show him the human side of some of the great ones of our land as well as those of other countries. In this task I hope I have been able to present a truthful and balanced picture.

At the same time, however, I flatter myself that this recital will enable my readers to have a backstage view of Rashtrapati Bhavan and in the process to obtain some insights into important national events in the period I cover. I offer no more than that.

But let me, in conclusion, add a warning. There are no sensational exposures in the following pages, no parading of skeletons in cupboards, no shocking scandals to titillate the muckraker. If, in the following pages, I have succeeded in bringing the distant personalities I write about closer to my readers, investing what are merely exalted names with real flesh and blood, I shall be more than rewarded.

Lastly, I extend my deep gratitude to Mr David of Poona and Dr K.L. Sarkar of Calcutta for inspiring me to write this book, and to Mr Trevor Drieberg for going through the manuscript.

LT. GEN. B.M. KAUL

Influences

Officered well, an Indian soldier is one of the finest, as there are no bad men but only bad officers.

1

It was a cold grey morning of January in New Delhi. Out for a walk in Vijay Chowk, I saw the ceremonial guard being mounted in front of Rashtrapati Bhavan. The officer wearing a black, peaked cap and gaberdine uniform marched smartly, heading the contingent. Every time he gave a full-throated word of command, his frozen breath scattered the fog. The foggy silhouette of Rashtrapati Bhavan, forming the backdrop, held out a beautiful promise of the future to a young officer.

The uniform lured me when I was 15, fresh from high school. This was perfectly natural. The British Raj had named certain Indian races martial. In undivided Punjab besides the Muslims and Jats this designation was given among Hindus only to the Mohyal Brahmins, of whom I was one. They were a militant clan, descended according to legend from Dronacharya, the initiator of the Pandavas into the art of war. Unlike other Brahmins who only performed religious rituals and other priestly duties, the Mohyals were primarily farmers and fighters. They were a rugged, sturdy folk, straightforward in their dealings and ever ready to lay down their lives in defence of their honour.

The Mohyals comprise seven sub-castes—Datt (popularly known as Datta), Chhibber, Bali, Mohan, Vaid, Bhamwal and Law. Porus, who fought the Greek invader Alexander the Great, was a Vaid. Titles like Bakshi, Chowdhury, Raizada and Mehta were conferred on them by the various rulers of Punjab for the distinguished services they rendered on the battlefield throughout the passage of history.

The folklore of the Mohyals extols the sacrifice of thousands of lives in combat with the imperial Moghul army to prevent a Hindu girl from being snatched away from her home to be inducted into the royal harem. There is the amazing feat of a Chhibber, Baba Praga, a general who at the age of 100 clove in two with his sword a Moghul general and the horse he sat on. This happened in the reign of Shahjahan. Another Chhibber, Bhai Mati Das, suffered martyrdom at the same time as Guru Tegh Bahadur for refusing to become

a Muslim at the behest of Emperor Aurangzeb. Mati Das was sawn in two at Chandni Chowk, where the Fountain now stands, in the presence of the Guru.

The brilliant military campaigns of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the first half of the 19th century would not have been possible without his well-organized artillery units. Consisting mostly of Balis, they were considered the best in India at that time. Commanded by two foreign officers, Gen Gardiner and Gen Court, they were the nucleus of the artillery units of the Indian Army today. Gen Wazir Singh, who conceived the campaign in Kashmir in the early 19th century along with Hari Singh Nalwa, was a Datt. He was later given the title Karrak (Dazzler) Singh for this feat.

According to official records, probably, the first Military Cross won by a member of the Indian Army in World War I went to a medical officer, Bali. In the recent operations against China and Pakistan fighting men of the Mohyal clan received three Mahavir Chakras and more than 11 Vir Chakras besides several other citations.

The Mohyals, emotionally closely knit, spread themselves in the 19th century in the Northwest Frontier Province, in Gurdaspur district of Punjab and places like Gulyana, Veerum, Daoba and Kanjrur in the Jhelum Valley. These places came to be known as Veerum Datta'n (the plural of Datta) and Kanjrur Datta'n.

Chowdhary Salig Ram Datta from Kanjrur was a court official in a small state in Daoba. He had two sons and a daughter—Ram Nath, Amar Nath (my father) and Durga Devi. Ram Nath Datta became an engineer when he grew up and was in charge of construction of the headworks at Hussainwala and Sulaimanki near Ferozepore, a town in Punjab now on the India-West Pakistan border. He was awarded a gold medal by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in 1928 on the completion of this arduous task. A few years late Ram Nath Datta resigned from government service rather than undertake the disposal of the body of the revolutionary Sardar Bhagat Singh

secretly on the bank of the Sutlej. The British authorities had carried out the death sentence on him a day ahead of schedule, fearing bloodshed in Punjab.

Chowdhary Amar Nath Datta was brought up from the age of 10 by his elder brother Ram Nath, his father having died when he was still a boy. After passing the Bachelor of Arts examination of the University of Lahore he entered the Provincial Civil Service of Punjab. He rose to be a deputy collector and was a close friend of the late Lt-Gen Kulwant Singh Datta, GOC-in-C, Western Command. I recall my father as a man of unswerving honesty and inflexible principles. He refused to compromise on truth.

An incident which took place when I was eight years old is still vivid in my memory. My father's last posting was at Renala Khurd, Montgomery District, now in Pakistan. I returned one evening from shooting practice with a new single-barrelled 12-bore gun to see a naked, protesting man being held down by seven of our house servants and literally bathed in cow's ghee. This strange ceremony had my father's entire office staff as spectators. The man, a murabbadar owning about 200 murabbas of land, equivalent to 500 acres, had offered my father 34 tins of ghee, two horses, two buffaloes and a donkey as a bribe. To purify the sinner my father ordered that all the tins of ghee be emptied on him in full public view.

Brought up strictly under the eyes of a father who was also a mother to me (I lost my mother when I was five), I had varied education. From four to six years I studied at a school run by a German missionary who was a Sanskrit scholar. I had my first lessons in Hindi here. The missionary was one of the few Germans who was not interned in World War II.

When independence and its sad corollary partition came, father opted for Pakistan. He enjoyed a high reputation among Punjab Government circles as an able administrator and an upright one as well. His best friends were Muslims. Up to July 27, 1947, there was no alarm or panic in Montgo-

mery District. Hindus and Muslims continued to live amicably and at peace as they had done for generations although ominous reports of communal clashes were pouring in from other parts of the province.

Our entire family of four brothers and two sisters left Renala Khurd for Dehra Dun for our summer vacation. Father, who had just recovered from a paralytic stroke, was to follow on August 11. The air at Lahore railway station was charged with tension. We were entering a different world, one where the floodgates of communal hate had burst and large numbers of people, thousands of them, were fleeing their ancestral homes with whatever scanty belongings they could carry in search of safety. The trains were full and overflowing. People swarmed on the roofs of compartments, clinging desperately to their bundles, as precious to them as life itself. At the station I saw a man with a stab wound in his back. Blood was oozing out of it, and his shirt was soaked in blood. Something twisted inside me. I was overcome by nausea. Would we ever return to Renala Khurd, I asked myself. I knew the answer.

We did not go back. Father, who had arrived in the last train to cross the India-Pakistan border before it was sealed, was unwell again. We had brought with us only some summer apparel and entrusted everything in our house to the faithful Muslim zilladar. On September 23 we had a letter from him informing us of events we had dreaded although we felt they were inevitable. A mob of about 3,000 had attacked our house. The zilladar's chowkidar had lost his life resisting them. All that was left after a day's looting was a few charpoys and the torn covers of a children's magazine.

My education continued in the religious atmosphere of Swarg Ashram, an institution run on ancient Aryan lines at Rishikesh, in the upper valley of the Ganga. English was taught here. I passed my high school examination privately at Dehra Dun and migrated to Delhi for my college education.

I appeared for a competitive examination for the Army in

mid-1951. Then came an interview, and I was selected for the National Defence Academy, Dehra Dun, joining in January 1952. What lay ahead in a soldier's life—except what I had read in the biographies of many famous soldiers—was an unexplored mystery to me.

At the Academy, life was tough. I had joined the Joint Services Wing, training all three services together. I was an Army cadet. We had to train for two years in the JSW and another two at the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun.

The Joint Services Wing was housed in the old artillery barracks at Clement Town. There were four cadets to a room. The fourth course was the seniormost. Cadet Malhotra of this course was the wing cadet captain. Smart, handsome and an all-rounder, he was a model to emulate. Later, he resigned from the Navy and married a princess of Gwalior.

Training was hard. The two years were divided into four terms, each ending with examinations. Life was a rush. The first term was a dog's life—running, marching, shouting and bullying were its hallmarks. There was so little time and so much to do. Between every period changes of dress were required, for example physical training apparel for the first, riding for the second and drill for the third.

The PT instructor extracted every ounce of energy from his pupils. One moment we were upside down, climbing the ropes the next, then crossing the wooden horse. The horses weren't usually cooperative. They were immovable objects, and no amount of kicking had any effect. With our legs astride we sat painfully, looking helplessly at the Instructor, who wondered whether we were on a charpoy or on horses. There were other horses who showed a lot of promise, went hell for leather towards the obstacle and decided to halt just at the foot of it. Someone must jump; the cadet does, and lands on the other side of the obstacle.

In this condition, the staggering cadet, hardly looking a gentleman, had to rush with sagging hosetops, trailing anklets

and rifle with sling connected at one end which he had snatched from the armoury havildar after having lost the rifle disc. He stood to attention, with a half-foot gap between his shivering knees, on the drill square to be sneered at: "*Yeh cadet malum nahin kaisa hai, uper se attention hai neeche se stand at ease hai.*" British Sergeant-Major Lynch lynched us with his acid tongue and swore himself utterly in favour of birth control in India. The entire squad had a hard time suppressing their grins when the Indian instructor shouted in a brand of Hindi-English of his own coinage: "*Kyon lafta hai, ap bhi lafta hai dusron ko bhi lafata hai.*"

In the evenings, there was quite a scramble with fingers crossed to look for one's name on the punishment list. Such comic relief was the spice of Academy life. The days were full of gruelling jungle warfare camps, route march competitions, obstacle competitions and cross-country races, physical training tests consisting of runs of two miles and ten miles and "chest out and chin in" parades. The one we had for Field Marshal Harding, who came to Dehra Dun after taking the salute at the passing-out parade of the Pakistan Military Academy at Kakul, stood out. We had to put extra "oomph" into the parade to get him to say that it seemed as if he had witnessed the Guards parade in England.

There were also strict respecters of discipline like M.A. Zaki and B.S. Malik. They were always at war with mathematics but good at games. Zaki, who later became my colleague at Rashtrapati Bhavan, was a great example in dress and behaviour to the juniors as well as seniors. He was average in studies but a good, shrewd leader all round. He played his cards well and volunteered to join his battalion (19 Maratha Light Infantry) when it was fighting a rearguard action as division protection battalion in Darrang Zong, in the Northeast Frontier Agency, during the Chinese onslaught in 1962, being very much aware that staying on any longer at Rashtrapati Bhavan would injure his career in the Army. He had a price on his head when fighting in the Naga

hills. Later he acquitted himself with remarkable bravery in the conflict with Pakistan in 1965 and was awarded the Veer Chakra.

Brig Apji Randhir Singh—the only Indian cadet to be awarded a gold medal at Sandhurst—was the Commandant of IMA. A stern disciplinarian, he did not touch alcohol, was deeply religious and at the same time secular in outlook, and a model officer. He had a tenacious memory and was said to know the names of all the cadets, numbering more than 800, at the Academy. He led an austere life and had rigid views on morality. On one occasion Gen K.S. Thimayya, at that time General Officer Commanding in Chief, Southern Command, declared that only a bachelor could do justice to army life. The Brigadier promptly said that he as Commandant would vouch that it was not difficult to do so though married. Marriage made a man more responsible, and he cited his own example. Ironically, his career in the Army faded after he left the Academy to command a brigade. He never went beyond brigadier's rank and retired.

There were brave officers like Col Gill and Col Gahlaut, who fought a man-eating tiger barehanded in the jungles surrounding Dehra Dun and were awarded Ashok Chakras for this feat. They fought well against China and Pakistan too. Capt Hayde, now a Colonel, was a platoon commander and was awarded the Mahavir Chakra in the war with Pakistan when commanding a Jat battalion. Capt (later Lt-Col) Ajit Singh, who was awarded the MVC for conspicuous bravery at Daulat Beg Oldi, in Ladakh, was another platoon commander.

Once on a visit to the Academy Gen Brij Mohan Kaul lectured us on Chinese methods of warfare and his experience in Korea as the Deputy to Gen Thimayya, who was Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission. He was full of praise for the Chinese, who had laid a special railway line from Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, to the Chinese border for his visit. I asked him: "How is it that in spite

of the Chinese being imbued with a spirit of patriotism, more than 20,000 Chinese prisoners refused to be repatriated to their country after the war?" He did not answer.

In this hard yet very enjoyable atmosphere of clean living, carefully nurtured in the excellent training ground of the Academy, the cadet is built up into a well-rounded officer—disciplined, reserved, smart, ambitious, loyal and an example to the youth of the nation.

On December 10, 1955, with the fading notes of Auld Lang Syne in my ears, a smile on my lips and tears in my eyes, I passed out of a cadet's life.

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THE UNTOLD STORY

By

LT. GEN. B.M. KAUL

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The Outfit

The safety, honour and welfare of your country comes first, always and every time.
The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command comes next.
Your own ease, comfort and safety comes last, always and every time.

2

I was posted to the 1 Battalion, Brigade of Guards, stationed at Red Fort, Delhi. Scores of people slept on the pavement under the mast of the national flag at the Fort. Each of these poverty-stricken derelicts huddled at night under a thin cotton sheet and shuddered in the biting cold of winter. Sometimes their frozen bodies were taken away in a Municipal Corporation wagon. This was painful to see. We would never redeem our pledge of complete freedom till these people had proper shelter, I thought.

I had the usual training of a junior officer who is called a "spare prick" and does all the dirty work. There was a shortage of officers in the unit and each officer had to perform many duties. The battalion was without a commanding officer and Lt K.D. Majumder was virtually in charge. We had a very good set of officers, Maini, Kami, Jai and Muji. They were smart and efficient, and we were a well-knit unit. The battalion had been in a peace station too long and we were sent in under canvas to Ambala for two years in a training division. The Divisional Commander was Maj-Gen B.M. Kaul.

Kaul was pushing, hard-driving and dynamic. He was good in administration and effective whatever he did. He had under him some very good unit commanders like Col Viegas of the Madras Regiment. Besides training, we took part in Operation Amar and built houses. The houses were halfway up when our battalion was moved out to Uri in Kashmir. This was the first time we set foot in the beautiful valley. It is a corner of paradise and worth fighting for.

We held pickets and life was monotonous. The areas we occupied were farflung and we had to patrol them constantly. I commanded a long-range patrol from Bara Kazinag to the Tithwal sector, the Tootmari ranges and down to Baramulla.

Our commanding officer was not getting on well with the brigade commander and was posted to the Territorial Army. Lt-Col John Dalvi (later a brigadier) took over and put the battalion in shape. The unit was considered one of the best

in the division in every respect. Dalvi commanded the 7 Infantry Brigade in NEFA and was captured by the Chinese in the initial stages of the fighting in 1962.

Once in my cadet days I visited the Garhwal Rifle Regimental Centre and was told the fascinating story of the ghost of the adjutant of the regiment long dead. The ghost visited and inspected the quarter guard every day on his white charger. A table was laid in the mess for him and the motions of serving him carried out. I remembered this incident at Kala Pass, a few miles beyond Rajouri, where the ghost of a military policeman was said to have directed some jeeps towards a khud, a deep ditch. The jeep drivers, however, ignored the pointing hand and kept to the road. Another incident of an opposite nature occurred in an exercise in the Tangdhar-Tithwal sector when the jeep I was travelling in skidded on a sharp bend and came to a sudden halt as if stopped by a boulder. We jumped out and looked. Yes, it was a boulder. The red hindlight of the jeep fell on a tombstone. The inscription read, "Col Hiren died here in a jeep accident" or words to that effect.

I raised the anti-tank platoon of our battalion when it was included in the war establishment. We worked hard and made this platoon a closely knit team. There was a terrific *esprit de corps* among the men. In the operational area the men and the officers developed very close relations and trusted each other absolutely.

In Kashmir, we hardly came across any civilians except coolies. They were a frightened lot, poor and ill-clad. Some of these casual coolies used to breakfast with us and lunch across the ceasefire line with the "Azad Kashmir" troops. These troops were sturdy but ill-fed. They were short of sugar and tea. We often parted with sugar in exchange for information. Our troops were well-fed and there was no dearth of rations or liquor. The enemy medium machine-gun emplacement across the Jhelum stared right into our picket. It was located at Pandu feature, occupied

in the Kashmir operation in 1947 by the 4 Kumaon under Lt-Col Khanna, who was awarded the Mahavir Chakra for this feat. We carried out intensive patrolling and came under fire off and on.

I was posted out to the Brigade of Guards Training Centre at Kota, in Rajasthan, and with heavy heart took leave of the unit and my anti-tank platoon. It was winter and snowing. The men of the platoon stood shivering in the open to bid me farewell.

Lt-Col Sathe was Commandant of the Centre. He was very strict and famous for his curt manner of speaking to seniors as well as juniors. He had briefly commanded our battalion in Delhi and had told the General Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Command, not to interfere with the administration of the battalion since "Sathe was commanding the battalion and not General. . . ."

Events moved rapidly in the country and I kept myself abreast of the happenings all round. India had entered a crucial phase of the Second Five-Year Plan and the Chinese made a big intrusion at Longju, in the Northeast Frontier Agency, in 1958.

Gen Thimayya resigned as Chief of Army Staff the day President Ayub Khan landed at Palam airport in 1959. Prime Minister Nehru met Ayub and conferred with him for two hours at the airport. On and off he shut his eyes and Gen Ayub thought him rude. As rumoured later, Thimayya resigned because his recommendations for the promotion of certain officers to the rank of lieutenant-general were amended and a promise that he would be made the first field marshal of the Indian Army was not fulfilled. The purpose of these recommendations was to push up Maj-Gen Kaul, who was in high favour with Defence Minister Krishna Menon. Thimayya accordingly made three recommendations:

Maj-Gen P.S. Gyani, Commandant of the Staff College at Wellington in the Nilgiris, who held a staff appoint

ment in the rank of major-general but held no command appointment.

Maj-Gen P.P. Kumaramangalam, GOC of a division, who held a command appointment but no staff appointment.

Maj-Gen Kaul, whose position was the same as Gen Kumaramangalam's.

Thimayya advised the Government that the qualifications of the three officers being equal they could be considered fit for promotion although they lacked an essential qualification of having held both command and staff appointments.

The Government decided that although Gyani was a promising officer he lacked command experience. Thus Kumaramangalam and Kaul were promoted, but Thimayya's elevation to field marshal was put off indefinitely.

I passed my promotion examination at the Brigade of Guards Training Centre and commanded a company under the strict eye of Col Sathe. He just would not let one's mind waver from professional and personal ethics.

The Indian Army has a hard core of young officers who are strictly professional and call a spade a spade. They are equal to the best professional soldiers in the world. They train hard and lead hard. They are devoted to their men and endeavour to practise the true art of leadership.

"Tomorrow you will put pips on your shoulders. How many of you will be officers? That time will tell." Thimayya said this in a passing-out address to cadets when he was Commandant of IMA.

In August 1960 I was called for an interview for the post of ADC to the President along with two other officers. My posting orders came in December 1960 and I joined the staff of Dr Rajendra Prasad on December 23, 1960, at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Aide-de-Camp

They also serve who only stand and wait.

3

An aide-de-camp is an officer who carries out the orders of a general or acts as a secretary officer attending on a head of state and performing the same duties. The term implies that this officer is essentially connected with the army. The assistance that he renders is of a varied nature and a wholetime job. In wartime he carries out reconnaissance, liaison, communication, correspondence, supervision of camps and everything connected with administration.

The fact that he looks after all aspects of a head of state's commitments in execution of his office, including his comfort and convenience, makes him indispensable to the person holding it. He is a friend of the dignitary's family, in whom they find an invaluable and intimate associate who knows his master well—his habits, personal likes and dislikes, idiosyncrasies and other characteristics. He has an intimate knowledge of the standing of that person as a man and as holder of the highest office in the land. The head of state therefore selects his aides-de-camp relying on his personal knowledge of the candidates concerned, who are also highly deserving and recommended by their outfits. Appointment to this office is highly prized. An ADC not only becomes a trusted and loyal official but also a part of the head's family. It is interesting to note that in the British days young officers who could be absorbed into the family through marriage were selected for this post.

The history of how aides-de-camp came to be appointed is very interesting. It dates back to the time of the East India Company. The British Governor-General was also Commander-in-Chief of the Indian armed forces, and he created a separate set-up to go with the second post for administrative convenience. Separate aides were accordingly appointed to serve him in the different capacities of Governor-General and C-in-C.

The practice of appointing aides-de-camp to the personal staff of the Governor-General continued from that time throughout British rule and was carried over into independence.

In colonial days these young officers were drawn from the British Army and served a definite tenure, going back to their units when this was over and being replaced by fresh ones.

After independence, Lord Mountbatten, the first Governor-General of India, established the precedent of choosing smart young Indian Army officers. Similar appointments were also offered to officers of the other two services, the Navy and the Air Force. To suit the conveniences of some provincial governors young officers were appointed from the police service to their personal staff. There is no set rule for the number of ADCs a President may have. It depends upon administrative convenience.

When India became a republic, the first President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, retained four aides on his personal staff after assuming office. Two were from the Army, one each from the Navy and Air Force. Two Junior Commissioned officers from the Army were also appointed. They were selected in recognition of meritorious service and given the honorary rank of captain. Later, on the formation of the Brigade of Guards in 1951 (on the pattern of the Guards in England) the President, who was its Colonel, appointed an additional ADC from it to his staff. Dr Prasad chose five because he had a large family quartered at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

This is a privileged office, and its holder is always looked upon with a certain amount of jealousy by his colleagues in uniform. The belief that an ADC's job is a cushy one is unfounded. The fact that he stays in the head of state's residence and moves around with him in eye-catching uniforms does not in the least mean that he has no responsibilities. As a matter of fact an ADC shoulders such heavy responsibilities that he cannot afford to make a mistake.

In the prevailing democratic set-up his every action is in full public view. His dealings are mainly with the public. Although in military uniform, he has to adopt a civilian outlook, mould his soldierly ways to fit smoothly into the intricacies of protocol.

A good ADC is not required to be only professionally competent. He must, in addition to being efficient and hardworking, be humble, unassuming, courteous and temperate at all times. All this requires an extraordinary amount of adjustment, an unusual ability on the part of a young officer to be extremely flexible at times, yet adhere to the principles which uphold the dignity and prestige of the nation in executing the duties of his office. He should be up to date on current affairs, and give an impression in dress, speech, bearing and behaviour of good breeding.

The ADC serves on the President's staff at the presidential pleasure. His duties are numerous and their proper execution calls for teamwork. Individual merit which does not contribute to *esprit de corps* is not desirable. The ADC makes his own career, and if he measures up to these exacting qualifications he gets a push towards rapid promotion.

The routine duties of an ADC to the President are many, the underlying principle being that when he is on duty he will assist the President in every way, attending as efficiently as demanded to matters of administration and protocol associated with the presidential functions.

These duties include attending to the President's personal convenience. He affords him personal protection and carries a pistol for this purpose. The ADC must also be prepared to act as a human shield to the President in case he is attacked. Since attempts on the life of a head of state are mostly the work of an individual there is not much more an ADC can do to protect his charge once a potential assailant gets past the inner cordon of security thrown around him.

Plenty of toil and sweat goes into the grandeur and clockwork precision of the various state functions the public often witnesses. The programme of events is drawn up well in advance and rehearsed to perfection. Every step, every movement literally, is measured to produce an effect of dignity and solemnity.

The permanent cccasions of state which demand such

elaborate preparations are:

Republic Day Parade, lasting about three hours.

Public receptions at Rashtrapati Bhavan, January 25 and 26.

Opening of the Budget Session of Parliament in February.

Public reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Independence Day.

The President's birthday.

There are set rules and timings for all these ceremonies. Special brochures detailing the duties of various members of the presidential staff are issued well in advance and rehearsed over and over again. The same procedure applies to ceremonies for the presentation of regimental colours and of credentials by foreign heads of mission in New Delhi, the reception of a visiting head of state at Delhi airport, and the ceremonial drive from there to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Those in charge of the arrangements must make allowance for all kinds of contingencies. And in spite of all the care and preparatory work instances of fumbling have occurred. Car and other failures have resulted in snarling up the most carefully arranged programmes.

Once a liaison officer of the Ministry of External Affairs caused a snarl by altering a scheduled programme without informing the ADC on duty. The officer made an appointment for the King of Nepal, who was on a state visit, when the ADC was taking time off to change his dress and have a meal. The King arrived at South Court accompanied by the liaison officer and found no car waiting for him. So far as the ADC was concerned the King should have been resting in his suite at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Hence the Protocol Division of the Ministry of External Affairs and the office of the Military Secretary to the President must maintain the closest touch and cooperate fully when a foreign dignitary visits New Delhi as a guest of the head of state.

King George VI had Indian princes among his aides-de-camp. Once when he was visiting the area of operations after the opening of the second front in Western Europe in World War II with Prime Minister Winston Churchill three maharajas accompanied him. Some British officers who were royal aides also travelled with the party. At one point where the party was to spend the night there were only two well-roofed buildings, one a mansion and the other the quarters for the servants attached to it. The King, Churchill and the British officers stayed in the mansion while the three maharajas shared a room in the servants' quarters.

The aura and decorum which surrounded the personal staff of the British Viceroy was not maintained under the succeeding Indian heads of state. They were not used to having personal staff of this type. In other words, they were not ADC-minded. They looked upon their aides as part of the colourful pageantry they had inherited from the old imperial regime which glorified the cult of personality.

There is the instance of a provincial Governor-designate who was asked by the Comptroller of his household whether he would like to retain the aides-de-camp of his predecessor. The incoming Governor told the Comptroller not to bother about staff as he was bringing his own "servants." This attitude among the new ruling elite spelt danger to the institution of ADC as originally conceived.

I recall one of the staff members at Rashtrapati Bhavan who exploited the talents of his much more accomplished wife to advance his career and lived up to his reputation as a social climber. This official was crude, did not choose his words carefully, was rude to women and fond of misrepresentation. He attributed statements to his colleagues, and when confronted flatly denied what he had said. He strode about Rashtrapati Bhavan with his coat buttons open. Foreigners often laughed at him. He had a zest for ballroom dancing but was devoid of skill, and his partner often walked off the floor.

On one occasion while discussing the duties of his personal staff Dr Radhakrishnan said he had received a note at one of his daily meetings with the public which contained these remarks:

"It is a matter of serious consideration whether the regalia of royalty is a necessary commitment to the republican system of government. Is it at all necessary to add lustre to the politically impotent office of President? His starched, whitewashed, coloured and ribboned aides-de-camp can hardly add an ounce of awe to the office of President when the Constitution has made this office a glittering glorified rubber stamp of the executive government, that is the Cabinet. India, under the present Government pledged to a socialistic pattern of society, could with profit look to both the socialist and the non-monarchist capitalist countries and would see that this debris of the imperial days—ADC—is nowhere to be found around any head of state. Then why are they around the President of India? Probably the last British Governor-General did not feel at home without them around him. It is a matter of debate whether the institution of ADC at Rashtrapati Bhavan would have been maintained if Shri Rajagopalachari had been the first Governor-General instead of Lord Mountbatten.

"Is it necessary that an officer of the rank of major-general, for whose training and maintenance millions of rupees are spent by the exchequer, should be wasted to stand attention behind the President? The President in turn has no professional use for a man of this high military rank, for is he not the Supreme Commander only in name? During the military operations bordering on a real state of war it is a common secret that the views of the Supreme Commander were either non-existent or not available. Probably he had no views. The President is the symbol of every aspect of national unity which takes within its fold all aspects of administration, civil and military, which would ultimately go to maintain this unity. Officers junior to a major-general lose their training in the art

of war. Incidentally, the President of India has maharajas as honorary aides. This is because the Viceroy of India also employed maharajas for this purpose. Nobody seems to have given thought to the utility and the feasibility of maintaining this institution."

On my asking his views on this document, the President made no comment.

The Citadel

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataracts leap in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Answer, echoes, answer, dying dying dying.

4

It is said that one day Lord Hardinge, Viceroy of India, was out on a hunt in a nearby village called Rakabganj. The village and its inhabitants were connected with Sikh history. People from it stole the body of Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was executed at the present site of Gurdwara Sisganj on the orders of the Moghul emperor Aurangzeb. The present site of Gurdwara Rakabganj, barely a stone's throw from Rashtrapati Bhavan and Parliament House, is the place where the Guru's body was secreted.

During the hunt the Viceroy went up a hillock. From that elevation he had a good view of the countryside and was so much captivated by its summit and surroundings that he decided to build the Viceregal Lodge (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) on that site. The first Lodge was where the University of Delhi stands today.

Rashtrapati Bhavan is a blend of Gothic and Indian architecture. It has columns unlike those known to Indian architecture and domes unlike those of European architecture. It is said that some stones used in its construction were brought from the different dominions of the British Empire. A large replica of the Star of India, a decoration used by the British to honour devoted subjects, still stands in the compound of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Second in size only to the Palace of Versailles, Government House, as the Viceregal Lodge was also known, was built in 1914. It took 15 years to build. Construction had to be slowed down because of the outbreak of the First World War. It was taken up vigorously in 1921 and completed in December 1929. The main building occupies five acres, with a dome in the centre. It has 340 rooms and one and a half miles of corridors. The highest point of the dome is 180 ft. The left shoulder is called South Court and the right North Court. South Court houses the guest rooms and certain offices of the Government of India. North Court consists of the apartments of the President and his personal staff. The portion just below the dome is the Durbar Hall, with the Ashoka Hall

and the Banquet Hall next to it. The Ashoka Hall was previously known as the Ballroom. It measures 68 ft by 63 ft. Murals illustrating couplets of the poet Nizami are painted on its ceiling. These murals are a curious mixture of Persian and Buddhist art although done by an Italian. The Banquet Hall measures 104 ft by 32 ft. It is panelled with teak, and the paintings of former Viceroys are hung on its walls in chronological order. The paintings of Dr Prasad and Dr Radhakrishnan which have been added to them were done by Biren De and Nicholas Roerich respectively.

While going round the Banquet Hall on his first visit to India in 1955, Nikita Khrushchev, then Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, turned to Prime Minister Nehru, who was accompanying him, and asked through his interpreter: "Why have the portraits of old British Viceroys who remind you of slavery?" Nehru replied: "You cannot wipe out history by removing these portraits."

The building cost Rs. 1.45 crores. Among the materials used were 7,600 tons of cement, 1,400 tons of steel, 1.45 million cubic feet of stone and 16.6 million bricks. Red and white stone was quarried at Dholpur, white marble at Jodhpur and black at Patiala. Yellow marble came from Jaisalmer and green from Baroda. The only imported marble was the chocolate variety on the floor of the Durbar Hall.

The wood used for the panelling of the doors and windows and furniture were from Indian forests—teak, toon, poon, haldeao. Rosewood, shisham and walnut were used in the furniture craftsmen made in Delhi. Most of the craftsmen came from Kartarpur, Punjab. The stonelayers came from Jaipur, Alwar and Jodhpur. The basement of the building has a number of rooms occupied by essential services such as a water pump, a boiler, store rooms, the kitchen, bakery and smithy.

The Moghul Gardens—the "backyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan" we used to call them—occupy an area of 15½ acres. The portion nearest the main building is the Moghul Gardens

proper, and the farther circular garden and the connecting portion the Purdah Gardens. The gardens were planned and laid at the same time as the main building by Sir Edwin Lutyens, whose statue adorns the Window to the Heavens next to the Banquet Hall. The Moghul Gardens are flanked by terraces. They are in full bloom in February and are open for three weeks to the general public. They grow a variety of roses, including black ones, on the terraces. Ashoka trees are prominent in the central portion. There are three lawns, East Lawn, Central Lawn and West Lawn. These are bordered by stone-flagged pavements and flanked by fountains. Important functions are held on these lawns. The last rays of the sun envelop the entire gardens, investing them and their playing fountains with a sparkle that contrasts strongly with the sombre background of the main building.

Rashtrapati Bhavan is furnished throughout with expensive and exquisite furniture, Persian carpets and chandeliers. The portraits of men and women who mattered in modern Indian history stare down at the visitor, who feels that he is turning over the pages of the past. History lurks in every corner. In the Durbar Hall the princely order of India once swore in all solemnity its allegience and loyalty to the imperial crown of Britain. Lord Mountbatten was sworn in there as the first constitutional Governor-General of the Dominion of India on August 14, 1947, under the shadow of Buddha's statue, dating beyond 300 B.C. Just about zero hour on that night there was a sudden explosion, caused by a popping camera bulb. Mountbatten was unmoved, though there must have flashed through his mind the threatening anonymous letter which he received the day before he landed at Karachi to take part in Pakistan's Independence Day celebrations. The old Ballroom once resounded to the music of dance bands playing for the guests at the lavish entertainments organized by Vicereines, when swashbuckling gentlemen swept ladies into their arms to the tune of old waltzes, and diamond tiaras glittered under the crystal chandeliers as with grace and

supreme elegance the former rulers of India enjoyed themselves. Those days are gone. This hall is now used only for the presentation of credentials by foreign heads of mission accredited to India.

The study once used by Viceroys and now by Presidents also witnessed many historical events. Mahatma Gandhi entered it for the first and last time in 1947 to breakfast with Mountbatten. Until then no Indian had ever stepped into this mansion without the approval of imperial protocol. It was here that the same Viceroy waited patiently to become the first Governor-General of free India. Dr Prasad, then President of the Constituent Assembly, and Nehru were overwhelmed by the occasion and Prasad forgot his lines. With wet eyes he could only mumble: "Please honour us by being the first Governor-General" or words to that effect. Mountbatten replied with a warm handshake: "It will be an honour for me, and with the help of God I will carry out the duties to the best of my abilities." Nehru ceremonially handed him an envelope supposedly containing the names of his Cabinet ministers, but when Mountbatten opened it to announce the names he found it empty. Nehru had forgotten the list. This was a favourite anecdote of Dr Prasad when he was President.

The guest wing consists of three stories, each having seven bedroom suites. These suites have Indian names. Visiting heads of state stay in the Dwarka Suite. The state reception rooms adjoin the study. The first of them is known as the Morning Room and its colour scheme is turquoise blue and lemon yellow. Next is the Panel Room with walls, floor and ceiling completely covered with Burma teak. This is used for swearing-in ceremonies and for meeting small delegations which call on the President. Next is the ADCs' loggia, where the personal staff dine and have recreation facilities.

The Yellow Drawing Room, where the predominant colour is yellow, lies next. The personal staff of visiting heads of state are introduced to the President here. The room has a

gold record of Gandhi's voice given by Columbia Broadcasting System of the USA and paintings by English and Italian artists. It opens on to a dining room with a large dining table which is used for lunch or dinner parties the President holds to entertain an important dignitary who may not be a head of state. On the wall is a painting illustrating Lao Tse's "circle of life."

The President's Estate has a golf course of 175 acres which is now put under cultivation twice a year. The nursery for plants and the cricket ground cover 48 acres, and the forecourt measures 13 acres. Outside the bounds of Rashtrapati Bhavan are the dwellings of the civilian staff, numbering about 7,000. Rashtrapati Nivas, the presidential lodge at Simla, and a retreat at Mashobra, also in Himachal Pradesh, were under the estate administration. The lodge at Simla has been donated to the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies.

The President's flag flies from the dome of Rashtrapati Bhavan when he is in residence. When he leaves New Delhi the flag comes down. Of architectural interest is the fact that the apex of the dome, the statue of Buddha in the Durbar Hall, Nandi the sacred bull and the Jaipur column outside the hall and the central points of Rajpath and India Gate are in a straight line.

Few heads of state anywhere in the world live in such imposing splendour as the President of India. Under British occupancy, its decor and furniture was Western and in impeccable good taste. After independence, efforts were made to give the mansion an Indian atmosphere, but I am afraid that the people who were entrusted with the task were not the right ones for it. This work was executed by the Comptroller of the Household, an Army officer, with a not very competent band of interior decorators under the direction of a member of the first President's family.

The motivating factor in this renovation was to erase from the eye, if not from the memory, all traces of imperial subjugation, and accordingly the rich and costly velvet curtains

and French tapestry was replaced by Khadi and other hand-made products. The selection of these materials could have been more tastefully done. Maintenance posed a problem, for they became soiled soon and were not changed as often as they should have been.

Exquisite sculptures, furniture fashioned by master craftsmen from original designs, crockery and cut glass were banished to the basement—tò gather dust in undeserved obscurity. The paintings which adorned the walls of the main halls of the mansion were « thodoxly Western but nevertheless of a high level of technical competence. They were joined by works which were authentically Indian, but unfortunately very inferior from the artistic point of view. There was a move to relegate the older paintings to the basement, but I believe Nehru and Mrs Indira Gandhi intervened and saved them from oblivion.

Dr Prasad hardly took any interest in seeing that Rashtrapati Bhavan was maintained properly. This task was left to the Comptroller and his assistant. The housekeeper was too old to bother about it, her frequent rounds of the huge complex being for the purpose of scolding the servants.

The khidmatgars and the khalasis were hardworking and honest. They knew their jobs and performed them conscientiously, having served under the strict comptrollers of the British days. They had to work well, for the Viceroys, including Mountbatten, took a close personal interest in maintenance. Lady Mountbatten made a thorough tour of inspection every morning before settling down to her other work.

But now things were different. Laxness had set in everywhere. Since the supervisors were lax the servants naturally took things easy themselves. Often the servants sought redress for grievances so petty that it seemed ridiculous that one should have complaints of this nature in the official residence of the head of state.

During Dr Prasad's time, the cuisine at Rashtrapati Bhavan

was not up to much in spite of the fact that their was a catering supervisor and a score of cooks, a kitchen with the most up-to-date gadgets and a specially built cooking-range, deep freezes and the other requirements stipulated by Government House regulations. The food served up was so bad that at one of the routine meetings called by the Comptroller to discuss household affairs it was decided to delegate an ADC to plan menus and check the quality of dishes. The choice fell naturally on an aide from the supply branch of the Navy. This resulted in an improvement. Meals were of a high order during Dr Radhakrishnan's occupancy of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Indeed, there was an all-round improvement in the tone of the presidential mansion during his incumbency. Mrs Gopal, his daughter-in-law, had a keen sense of what was in good taste in household design and took upon herself the task of redecoration. Dust-catching khadi was replaced by raw silk for hangings, precious wares were dug out of the lumber rooms in the basement, cleaned thoroughly and put back in their old seats of honour.

Mrs Gopal brought about changes that were typically Indian, modern and in excellent taste. She not only renovated the guest apartments in South Court but also took a keen interest in the comfort of the President's personal staff, especially the aides-de-camp. Dr Radhakrishnan shared this concern for style in living. On and off he paid surprise visits to various parts of the mansion, not omitting the kitchen and the pantry and scullery, and if he found a fan or light unnecessarily on issued a reprimand to the person responsible.

The First Head

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

5

On January 26, 1950, India emerged as a republic about two and a half years after independence. Dr Prasad stepped into the highest seat of "no power" to launch his new enterprise "with truth and non-violence and, above all, with heart within and God above." Temperamentally meek and mild and unassertive, he lent a quiet dignity to the office. He was so averse to controversy and dispute that he did not object even when All India Radio censored his broadcast speeches.

Nehru wanted Rajagopalachari to be the first President of the Republic. He felt that as Governor-General Rajagopalachari had familiarized himself with the functions of the office. Besides, he had made a profound impression on the diplomatic corps in New Delhi. But the majority of other Congress leaders overruled Nehru. They preferred Prasad. It is interesting to note that Prasad finds mention in Nehru's *Autobiography*, written in 1935, only once, and this in a footnote.

On the other hand, when Prasad became president of the Congress, Nehru did not at first find a place in the party Working Committee. Ultimately Maulana Azad managed to get him included in this body. Prasad's election as Congress president followed a big upheaval in the party. This was the result of the crisis created after Subhas Chandra Bose, who had defeated Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhi's nominee for the presidency, by an overwhelming majority, failed to form a Working Committee of anti-Gandhi elements. Bose resigned in disgust and Prasad was a stop-gap choice as president.

Azad observes that in the days of struggle before independence Prasad was accustomed to subordinating his judgment to Gandhi's. Prasad wanted to resign from the Congress Working Committee if it resolved to support the war effort on condition the British declared India free. He even wrote to Azad saying that for him non-violence was more important than even freedom. But he is credited with taking the lead at the time of partition for the instant division of the Indian

Army on the basis of community, the Muslim units going mostly to Pakistan and the others to India.

As President, Prasad lived as before when he had been a lieutenant of Gandhi, simply and austerely. His daily work dress was khadi kurta, dhoti and white cap. He wore light pumps on his feet. He was asthmatic, and the ADC on duty had to carry an asthma pump constantly. Wherever the President went the ADC was expected to station himself behind him and hand him the pump at the approach of an attack.

Prasad led a simple life. His wants were few. He spoke little in a low, hoarse voice. But he was mentally very alert. He grasped situations quickly. He had few enemies, if any, but people often took advantage of his generosity and kindness. Large numbers of them from his native village in Bihar flocked to Delhi and installed themselves in Rashtrapati Bhavan and fed at his expense. There were times when as many as 42 of his kinsfolk were in occupation and the aides had a tough time looking after them.

Once when he was President of the Constituent Assembly he was resting under a tree in the compound of his bungalow in New Delhi. He was clad only in a dhoti, having cast off his kurta because of the heat. A chaprasi from the Assembly came with some confidential papers which were to be delivered only to Prasad. The chaprasi failed to recognize him in his barebodied state and refused to hand the documents to him.

Prasad's relations with other outstanding Congress leaders like Nehru and Pandit G.B. Pant, who was Union Home Minister, were very cordial. Nehru and he had great personal regard for each other, but Nehru was inclined at times to give him less than his due respect as head of state. He often kept Prasad waiting when he was to call on him by appointment at Rashtrapati Bhavan, but this may have been because of pressure of work.

Nehru also had a habit of turning up late at official receptions. Though they never ceased to exhibit their high regard

for each other when they met, the general feeling among the higher staff at Rashtrapati Bhavan was that Nehru treated Prasad as the mere titular head of state.

The President's wife, Mrs Rajbansi Devi, had long been crippled in the lower limbs and was completely bedridden. She was deeply religious, and despite her physical handicap she went daily to Birla Mandir to pray, with ADC 2 to escort her.

The President's personal wants were attended to by Mr. Sita Ram and his Private Secretary (Hindi). It appeared that her views carried weight with the President. She accompanied him on most of his Indian and foreign tours. She was also influential in making last-minute change in official programmes and postings. Even in shaping the President's opinion of people and things her views mattered.

It is said that on one occasion an ADC was brought before Dr Prasad to explain an incident when one of the secretaries was asked to alight from the official car in which Mrs Rajbansi Devi was to drive to Rashtrapati Bhavan from Rajghat. The only explanation the ADC could offer was that he had received orders to this effect from the first lady of India.

It is said that the President's arrival was delayed on account of this Secretary at a state banquet in his honour when he visited Japan. The Secretary, who had accompanied him, had fallen sick. The President, who always cared for his staff, wanted to cancel his engagement. The Military Secretary was distraught when he learnt this and explained to the President that serious damage would be caused to New Delhi's efforts to promote friendly relations with Japan, if the engagement was cancelled. The President thereupon went to the banquet. But he was greatly upset at having to leave the ailing Secretary behind.

Another incident in which a situation was mellowed by the deftness of the Military Secretary was when the President abruptly wanted to cancel his holidaying in Simla. The Military Secretary broached the subject with the President and

prevailed upon him not to cancel the holiday to see the Prime Minister in Delhi. It is said that upon the President's recommendation this Secretary was later appointed as Deputy Secretary in a Central Ministry.

In spite of his poor health Prasad was a stickler for schedule. He woke at 4.45 a.m., had a cup of tea, prayed and set out on a walk in the grounds of Rashtrapati Bhavan at 5.45. After his walk his private staff assembled for instructions. He dictated most of the replies to correspondence, memos and official notes before he attended office at 8 a.m. Exactly at five minutes to eight the senior ADC on duty escorted him to his study on the ground floor. He went by lift down to the ground floor and passed through a long corridor whose ceiling was covered with paintings in tempera by the Curator of Rashtrapati Bhavan, Mr Bose. A portrait of Lord Wavell, executed by a well-known British painter Sir Simon Elvis hung just outside the entrance to the study. It is no longer there, having been removed with other portraits and objects remindful of the colonial past.

The President's study was tastefully decorated with white khadi with handprinted designs, Chinese tapestries and the insignia of battalions of the Indian Army and commissions of the Navy and Air Force. His desk was placed in the far corner of the study. Beside him was a crystal plastic telephone and two radio receivers. He could tune in to the proceedings of the Lok Sabha on one and to the Rajya Sabha on the other.

It was the job of ADC 1 to see that these gadgets were in working order. The telephone in the study hardly ever rang because nobody was expected to ring up the President direct. The only instance on record was when a harassed operator in charge of the Rashtrapati Bhavan switchboard complained to the President about the alleged highhandedness of a telephone inspector.

Dr Prasad received visitors seated in a corner of the big sofa in his study. He seldom rose except when he received foreign dignitaries. Normal appointments lasted five to 10

minutes except when the Prime Minister or Vice-President called for talks on affairs of state. The ADC I was not present during these appointments except when the President directed him to stay. There were standing instructions that visitors should generally wait in the anteroom until the exact time of their appointment.

There were exceptions, of course. The Vice-President, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister were escorted into the study as soon as they arrived, no matter what the President's schedule was. On one occasion this gave rise to a comic situation.

Home Minister Pant arrived suddenly one evening. A shrill bell rung by the sentry outside North Court informed ADC I of his arrival. The aide went out to receive him and found him struggling with his dhoti, which had opened as he alighted from his car. He walked down the corridor leading to the study still struggling with the dhoti.

The aide opened the study door and ushered Pant in. As he did so the President came out of the adjoining toilet also knotting his dhoti. On seeing each other, without bothering about the dhotis, they greeted with folded hands. The President's aide present, though flustered, promptly came to the assistance of the VIPs.

My first tour assignment with the President was a day's visit to Calcutta. The object of the visit was to call on Dr Sri Krishna Sinha, Chief Minister of Bihar, who was ailing and undergoing treatment in a hospital in that city. Miss Padmaja Naidu, Governor of West Bengal, received the President at Dum Dum airport. As soon as we alighted from the aircraft which brought us from Delhi the President wanted to know whether one Babu Sinha was at the airport. He spoke in muffled tones in his low, hoarse voice. Miss Naidu was unable to grasp what he said. He leaned forward towards her and repeated his question.

She was still unable to follow him. The President looked at me, and I leaned over and conveyed his message. Miss

Naidu replied, rather tartly, that she did not know whether any Babu Sinha was there or not.

Later, when the presidential party had arrived at Raj Bhavan, the Deputy Military Secretary called me up and said the Governor was annoyed at my behaviour. She did not like the manner in which I leaned and spoke over to her. The reprimand shook me. I immediately got in touch with her ADC, who explained that she was in a bad mood as her pet cat had been sick for two days.

I accompanied the ADC to the Governor's apartment. She was coming downstairs with the cat in her arms. I bowed and apologized for not being "up to the mark" in my behaviour. She was in a better humour than at the airport, and patting the cat, forgave me saying that I should have kept my distance. As she spoke the cat, whose condition seemed to have improved, purred.

At Rashtrapati Bhavan, the President retired from his study exactly at 1 p.m. for lunch. He often ate in the family lunch room on the second floor. His meal consisted of dal, brinjal and curd, with puris and sometimes rice. Sattu, an extract of barley, was a favourite dish. He ate light on the advice of his doctors.

The unremitting attention of the President's surgeon, Col (later Maj-Gen) S.S. Maitra, was responsible to a large degree for warding off serious complications in his state of chronic ill health. It was a taxing responsibility, and Maitra used to literally count the days for the presidential term to expire.

Just before he was to set out on a tour of the South, Prasad vomited blood. That was on July 19, 1961. On examination he was found to be suffering from stomach ulcer. He was "operated" on at Dr Sen's Nursing Home. Dr Sen, Col Maitra and Col Rao, the President's personal physician, and some other leading doctors of Delhi attended on him. Col Bird, of the Armed Forces Medical College, Poona, was flown to the capital overnight to carry out a blood transfusion. The

Vice-President, Dr Radhakrishnan, took over as acting President on July 25, 1961.

The semi-operation was a delicate one, but the President came through it safely. Two Army nurses attended on him during the month and a half he stayed at the nursing home. For the excellent care they took of him in his illness the doctors and the Military Secretary were later awarded the Padma Bhushan. President's Private Secretary was constantly at his bedside although his family resented this.

Though largely ineffective, because he held an office of little power or influence when there was a strong Prime Minister, Prasad had personal qualities which earned him the respect and even admiration of those who were in close touch with him. Love for truth, simplicity and compassion were his outstanding qualities. He had great sympathy for the downtrodden and those in suffering.

Mostly an invalid during his period of office, he frequently kept company with sadhus and listened as they sang bhajans and recited the Gita. He strictly observed fast days and other Hindu religious customs. He went, despite his poor health, on a yatra to Badrinath and observed all the rituals of dan and dharma.

He had a photographic memory although well advanced in his sixties. He could read a page of a book and repeat it from memory without missing a word or mark of punctuation. He did not act as a signing machine when dealing with appeals for clemency on behalf of persons sentenced to death. A skilled lawyer himself, he studied the legal aspects of each case very thoroughly and satisfied himself that the accused had been provided with proper defence. He frequently called Deputy Home Minister Datar for information about appeals.

Prasad was very fond of his grandchildren. They frequently visited him and addressed him affectionately as Baba. He followed with interest the progress of their studies. In family gatherings he was fond of anecdotes on many subjects. He

was very fond of his sister Buaji. She was a member of his household throughout her life and was its effective ruler. Her death grieved him much.

A true Gandhian in spirit and letter, he spun the charkha daily and prayed in his beautiful, small family temple. He believed in astrology implicitly. His friends exploited this belief to make him believe he would "die in harness." A patriot to the very core, this old freedom fighter was moved to tears while looking at bullet holes in the walls of Jallianwala Bagh in 1961. He addressed a mammoth gathering soon after and roused them to a frenzy of enthusiasm. His Private Secretary remarked afterwards that "it was like the old days."

The President was very fond of Pant, who was constantly ailing like him. They got along extremely well when they were together. Prasad frequently mused aloud, saying that the generation of freedom fighters was dying out. Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Saif-ud-din Kitchlew were all dead. The few left like himself felt "lonely."

Prasad could be moved to tears by a hard-luck story. His hand would move almost automatically to his pocket to help the victim of adverse circumstances. The bulk of his presidential salary went to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. He hardly had any money for his own use. At the time of his retirement he requested the Government to release a new car for his personal use without charging him the usual excise duty. The Finance Ministry refused and he had to be content with a second-hand vehicle.

was very fond of his sister [illegible]. She was a member of the household throughout her life and was its effective ruler. Her death grieved him much.

A true Gandhian in spirit and letter, he spurned the trappings [illegible] in his [illegible], most family [illegible]. He believed in austerity, simplicity. His critics [illegible] tried to make him believe he would "die in harness." As [illegible] he got very sore, the old freedom fighter was moved to tears while looking at bullet holes in the walls of Jallianwala Bagh in 1958. He addressed a memorable gathering soon after and roused them to a frenzy of enthusiasm. His Private Secretary remarked afterwards that "it was like the old days."

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Foreign Visitors

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen.
Round many Western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

6

The first ever presentation of colours to an infantry battalion took place at Ranikhet in 1961. The unit was the 4 Kumaon, and the presentation was made by the President. The ceremony was combined with the reunion of the Kumaon Regiment.

Gen Thimayya, who had retired from the Army a few months earlier, was present as a former commander of the unit. So was Lt-Gen S.P.P. Thorat, GOC in C, Eastern Command, who had been invited because he had been associated with the Kumaon Regiment in the battle of Kangaw in Burma in the Second World War. Thimayya had commanded the 8/19 Hyderabad and Thorat the 2/2 Punjab in this battle. Lt-Gen L.P. Sen, who had commanded 8 Baluchis in the same encounter with the Japanese, was also a guest at the function. All three had been lieutenant-colonels at the time and were all awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

Thimayya was my ideal of an officer and had been so for many years. After retirement he had taken to agriculture in Mercara, in his native Coorg, and was Deputy Chairman of the All-India Coffee Planters Association.

The reunion of the regiment was celebrated with great pomp. The President retired about midnight, but his aides stayed on. Thorat gave a speech in Thimayya's honour and recounted his memories of Kangaw. He said soldiers were soldiers first and last and should have nothing to do with politics. Some Army officers had lost their sense of discipline and were seeking promotion through the backdoor. This must be curbed, he said, and held up Thimayya as a model for all officers.

The state visit of Queen Elizabeth II of Britain to India in 1961 was memorable in many ways. The last British monarch to visit this country was her grandfather, George V, in 1911. She was the first British ruler to do so after India became independent. She was accompanied by her husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

When the Royal Air Force Britannia VC-10 bringing the royal visitors taxied to a halt near the red carpet which had been laid at Palam for them there was a throng of distinguished people waiting to greet them. On the left were members of the Nehru Government and the diplomatic corps. Next were leading citizens of Delhi headed by Mayor Nur-ud-din Ahmed. The general public were in an enclosure cordoned off from the VIPs at the far end of the tarmac. A decorated platform with a battery of microphones had been installed for the formal speech-making on the occasion.

The Queen appeared at the head of the gangway in a shining dress of light blue. She wore a white hat with petals. The Duke followed in a dark blue suit. The President greeted her as she stepped for the first time on Indian soil with a warm handshake. He held on to her hand for a fraction of a second. Nehru, who had met her before at conferences of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London, gave her a friendly smile and asked how the journey had been. Prince Philip seemed rather stiff although he managed to work up a smile.

After the preliminary greetings the Chief of Protocol, Mr M.R.A. Baig, introduced the diplomats. He executed this task smoothly and with grace. It was said that he knew not only the names of all the members of the diplomatic corps but also their histories. Then came the turn of the distinguished citizens. When this was over the Queen mounted the platform and replied to the President's address of welcome. She spoke in a highpitched voice and said she was happy she had fulfilled the long-cherished dream of visiting India.

The Queen and her party then drove in state to Rashtrapati Bhavan. At its gates the President's mounted Bodyguard, numbering 141 and in their ceremonial uniforms, took their place at the head of the motorcade. The President's personal staff had assembled at South Court to greet the royal visitors. They stood in line according to seniority and were introduced first to the Queen, then to Prince Philip and finally to her personal staff headed by the Earl of Scarborough. Among

her staff was an equerry, Capt Peter Harvey of Fusiliers. His father had been Comptroller of the Household at the Viceregal Lodge before independence.

Lady Rose Baring was the Queen's lady-in-waiting. She was the centre of an embarrassing incident when the Queen was away from Delhi on tour. She had gone to dinner at a friend's place and returned around 1.30 in the morning. She looked in her bag for the key to her room, only to discover it was missing. She had not handed over the key before going out the previous evening to her room attendant as was customary.

I was in bed when I received a call from the armed watchman on duty at South Court informing me that one of the memsahibs who had come with the "Rani" was crying outside her room. The door was opened with a master key and Lady Baring spent the remaining hours till morning in her own room.

The Queen occupied the Dwarka Suite while she was in Delhi, and the Duke the adjoining one. Whether she chose to stay alone out of preference or because of the demands of protocol I cannot tell. The suite has an anteroom, a bedroom, and a bathroom with a large marble bathtub enclosed with glass panels. Showers are attached to aluminium brackets on the panels.

The walls of the main rooms are panelled with Burma teak. The vast double bed in the bedroom is of sandalwood and has a counterpane of red velvet. There are different telephones for internal and overseas calls. While she was in residence the Queen spoke to her children in London every night.

When the suite was being made ready for the Queen, security officers of the Union Government and of the British High Commission had searched the rooms thoroughly for concealed cameras, tape recorders and microphones.

The Queen was very particular about being punctual for her engagements. She was however late once, but the fault was Prince Philip's. There was a cultural entertainment at Ashoka Hotel, and as the time approached for her to set out

from Rashtrapati Bhavan there was no sign of the Prince, who was playing polo.

The Queen kept looking at her wristwatch nervously. Finally, she told the ADC in waiting to make preparations for her to leave. She would not wait any longer for her husband, who was always late, she said. But just as she was entering the car standing in the porch Prince Philip came down the corridor with long, quick strides and joined her.

We members of the personal staff of Rashtrapati Bhavan had several opportunities to observe the Queen closely. What we saw was quite different from her photographs. She was short, barely 5 foot 1 inch, and skinny. The skin under her eyes was wrinkled, and her face was heavily made up whenever she appeared in public. In the lifts, she often glanced at herself in the mirror.

She had a habit of studying her painted fingernails and adjusted her hat frequently. She greeted the crowds which waited outside the main gate of Rashtrapati Bhavan and at other places she visited to glimpse her with a measured wave of her right hand. I got the impression she did not smile or wave her hand more than convention or the needs of courteousness demanded.

Prince Philip was tall and lanky. The hair on his head was scanty. His personality charmed both men and women. He spoke softly and rapidly. I received a large number of letters addressed to him by his female admirers in various parts of the country and passed them on to him.

I recall an incident on January 25, 1961, at an afternoon reception in honour of the Queen and the Duke on the central lawn at Rashtrapati Bhavan. When the royal couple and their entourage arrived on the lawn the Queen veered to the right and the Duke to the left so that they could meet all the guests. I was attached to the Duke that day. After completing a round of the lawn he stood talking to a mixed group. He asked a major from Army Headquarters why there was barbed

wire round the headquarters, to keep him in or to keep others out. The major replied: "It is for both, sir."

While the major was replying the Duke's attention was drawn to a young woman at a distance dressed in gay, eyecatching colours. He went straight to her and asked her name. The excited guest replied, as though she had prepared for such an encounter: "Oh, your Royal Highness, I have been a fan of yours from childhood. I have collected every picture of yours that has appeared in the papers. I have also written to you several times, but you have not replied. You fascinated me when you came two years ago to attend the International Science Convention. I was in Patiala and my sister was getting married, so I had no opportunity to see you. Today is a red-letter day in my life."

The woman paused for breath at this point. Before she could get started again the Duke looked at her steadily and with all the charm at his command took both her hands firmly in his and said: "My dear beautiful young lady, how do you feel now?"

The Queen interrupted her visit to India to go to Pakistan and Nepal. The Indian newspapers published reports of her statements praising Pakistan's Basic Democracy, which we in India regarded as nothing more than a figleaf for military dictatorship. Her statements were not relished here and gave rise to controversy in Government circles.

The Prime Minister was once overheard telling the President this fulsome praise for a thinly veiled dictatorship was childish. It is difficult to tell whether an incident which occurred at Palam on the Queen's return from Pakistan was deliberate or accidental. I had gone to the airport as the representative of the President. Her aircraft arrived at 9.30 a.m. on February 16 and halted at the VIP enclosure. Nehru was there talking with the British High Commissioner, Sir Paul Gore Booth, who was hard of hearing, and Lady Booth.

The hatch of the plane opened and the gangway was wheeled

up to it. The Queen appeared in the doorway. Nehru, with his back to the plane, continued to hold Booth and his wife in talk. The air crew alighted and lined up at the foot of the gangway. Booth kept looking nervously over Nehru's shoulder at the Queen, who was standing still in the doorway.

Nehru continued to talk, apparently completely oblivious of the embarrassment he was causing. I should have received the Queen on the President's behalf if Nehru had not been present. To save the situation, went close to him and said in a low voice: "Sir, the Queen is waiting." Nehru swung round, looked me straight in the face and said: "What am I supposed to do then?" I replied: "Please receive her." He hesitated a moment. Then, putting on his most fascinating smile, he walked to the foot of the gangway and received the Queen, who was already on the last step. The tension was over and everybody, including Booth, who was sweating profusely, relaxed.

On March 1, on the eve of the Queen's departure from India, the President presented her with a sandalwood carving, 3½ ft by 2½ ft, with gold and ivory inlay. It depicted a scene from the Mahabharata, Lord Krishna imploring Arjuna to perform his duty on the battlefield. The gift was costly and beautiful, an example of the skill of Indian craftsmen. The Queen was delighted and asked many questions about the Bhagvad Gita.

Before they left, Prince Philip and she presented the President with a silver inkstand with their autographs. The presentation took place in the President's study. Besides the three of them, Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Mr Baig, the Military Secretary and I were present. The Queen appeared to be embarrassed at her small and common gift compared with that she had received, which stood in the study. The President, seeing her discomfort, remarked in his quiet, dignified manner that "it is only the feeling of friendliness that is important, not the size of a gift." Baig intervened at this point to introduce a new topic. He mentioned that the

President was writing his autobiography and added, turning to the Queen: "After your Majesty's visit is over the President is adding another chapter to his autobiography."

"Really?" asked the Queen quickly, looking at the President and obviously grateful for this switch in the topic of conversation. "Yes," replied the President, "I have been able to write some chapters already."

"How many have you written?" the Duke asked.

"About 1,200 pages," the President said.

"Oh, where did you get all that time?" the Queen interjected.

Once again, quietly, the President said: "Your Majesty, I have been writing for a very long time. Don't forget I was in your father's jails for 16 years. There was plenty of time to write in jail."

The silence that followed was deadly. The listeners were struck dumb. Their minds were numbed. Nobody could think of anything to say this time to relieve the shock this unexpected, and therefore all the more devastating, remark had caused. Mrs Pandit, who had also spent many years in detention like her brother the Prime Minister, was a study in facial expression. She looked at me, then at Baig, and finally out of the study window into the garden.

Baig fumbled for a conversational gambit after the initial shock was over and picked on the "fine weather" Delhi was experiencing at the time. The President had a sudden spasm of asthma, and I busied myself with the pump which invariably accompanied him wherever he went. Queen Elizabeth bade the President a hurried goodbye and strode out of the study accompanied by Mrs Pandit, with the Duke following a few feet behind.

The President gave a state banquet in honour of the Queen. Protocol demanded that he call on her with his senior staff in her suite 15 minutes before it started at 8.30 p.m. The Queen and the President, escorted by ADC 1 and ADC 4 and other officials, then proceeded from the Dwarka Suite

along the corridor that led to the Ashoka Hall, where all the guests awaited them standing in a hollow square. The royal guest and her host halted under the nearest canopy in front of poet Nizami's portrait. Jana Gana Mana was played and the guests were presented to the Queen.

Before setting out from the Dwarka Suite the Queen expressed admiration for the paintings that adorned the walls of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Turning to a General, who was present, she remarked that he must have seen many paintings in Europe when he was there. After a pause she asked: "Have you seen the Mona Lisa?" The general knowledge of the gentleman to whom she put this query was not something to be proud of. He was aware of this shortcoming, and used to confess that he was "only a general with no knowledge." He had apparently never heard of Mona Lisa before the Queen had mentioned it and he glanced at those standing on either side for a hint of what the Queen was talking about. Somebody spoke and the General caught the word "lady." He promptly turned back to the Queen and said: "She was a very nice lady, your Majesty, and she gave a wonderful performance in London." The Queen was photographed immediately after this, and the picture which resulted was I believe one of the best ever taken of her.

Mrs Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of the American President, came to India on a nine-day visit on March 12, 1962. She was accompanied by her sister, Princess Radziwill. We of the Rashtrapati Bhavan staff had heard much about her charm and how Khrushchev had mellowed under her spell at his first meeting with her husband in Vienna. President Kennedy was considered a good friend of India, and for that reason Mrs Kennedy's visit was looked forward to with great enthusiasm. People spoke of her as the "American Rani."

Nehru, who was fond of the company of good-looking women, had taken a great liking to her and she was invited to stay in the Prime Minister's House on Teen Murti Marg. A

President was writing his autobiography and added, turning to the Queen: "After your Majesty's visit is over the President is adding another chapter to his autobiography."

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Nehru, who was fond of the company of good-looking women, had taken a great liking to her and she was invited to stay in the Prime Minister's House on Teen Murti Marg. A

bedroom was specially decorated with Indian materials and motifs for her. Sandalwood divans, raw silk curtains with batik paintings, handloom bedspreads and other handicrafts, all in the best taste, were there to impress the American First Lady.

Mrs Kennedy and Princess Radziwill landed at Palam airport in the small hours of the morning. They were to call on the President at 11 a.m. the same day. Earlier, Mrs Kennedy watched the President address a joint session of both Houses of Parliament at the Central Hall. She then drove with her sister to North Court. The President received them in the Morning Room, which opened on to the Moghul Gardens, in full bloom.

The President sat with Mrs Kennedy on his right and the Princess on his left. On Mrs Kennedy's right was Mr B.K. Nehru, our Ambassador in Washington. The President appeared to be in some doubt about the identity of the two visitors. He had heard that Mrs Kennedy was very beautiful and charming, but so was Princess Radziwill. The President, after some silent thinking, seemed to have come to the conclusion that the Princess was Mrs Kennedy. He directed most of his conversation towards her. This embarrassed Mrs Kennedy and Nehru. To clear the misunderstanding an aide pointed to Mrs Kennedy and remarked that she had been to Parliament House before coming to Rashtrapati Bhavan to pay her respects to the President. This well-meaning attempt to clear the cobwebs of misunderstanding failed. The President turned to Princess Radziwill and inquired how she had liked the proceedings.

The President decided to present two autographed pictures of himself to Mrs Kennedy. I was deputed to deliver them to her before she left New Delhi. I went over to the Prime Minister's House with them and she received me with a kindly smile and friendly words of welcome. She removed the wrappings of the gift with the excited curiosity of a child. The silver-framed photographs thrilled her. As I watched

her reactions I gathered the impression that she had a simple almost childlike, outlook on life.

I took the opportunity to study Mrs Kennedy's face carefully. It was triangular in shape, with eyes unusually far apart. She was taller than the average Indian woman and her body had an athletic suppleness. Yet she was very feminine, particularly in her manner of speaking. She spoke in a soft, low voice which turned husky when it struck a low note. She gave her hearers the feeling that she was whispering to them out of a dream. She was indeed a very captivating person.

I sketched her face roughly as I sat with her and painted her portrait in oils when I returned to Rashtrapati Bhavan, my mission completed. I presented the painting to her at a reception at the United States Embassy the following day. She received me in a special room for the presentation. I am not sure whether my effort did her justice, but she seemed to like it and said the resemblance was remarkable. She said something about hanging it in President Kennedy's bedroom or study. I was informed later that she took it back with her to the White House.

Mrs Kennedy was a skilled horsewoman, and during her stay in Delhi devoted a part of her morning to various equestrian exercises. There was quite a laugh and some amused comments in the local press when her dashing Indian escort came a cropper in negotiating an obstacle on horseback. On the rest of her tour she often inquired about him.

On May 18, 1961, Vice-President Lyndon Johnson and his wife Lady Bird stopped over in Delhi for a day in the course of a world tour. Mr Johnson was received with the full honours accorded only to a head of state. His wife and he were accommodated in the Dwarka Suite. They had a tight schedule of official events, but despite this the President's grandchildren, numbering around 11 and ranging in age from 14 to 21 years, insisted on being presented to the visitors in

their suite.

The Johnsons were apparently snatching a little rest before getting ready to attend a reception in their honour that evening. They came out to meet their unexpected visitors in casual wear. Mrs Johnson was in a dressing gown, slightly frayed at the edges, and had her hair in curlers. The Vice-President was in shirt and trousers. The grandchildren were headed by Tara, the oldest unmarried granddaughter of the President and an exceptionally intelligent girl.

A senior officer of the President's staff accompanied them. He was famous for dropping bricks in the course of conversation. After the preliminary introductions there was silence on both sides. The children were tongue-tied, having nothing in fact to say to the visitors. The Johnsons on their part were evidently anxious to get back and rest.

To break the ice the ADC present said: "Mrs Johnson, it must have been a great day for you when Commander Alan Shepherd made his first space loop and came down." Here was a topic of national pride to these Americans, especially since the Russians had scored a lead over them in the space race by sending Yuri Gagarin round the earth and bringing him down safely.

Mrs Johnson replied vivaciously: "Oh, yes, it was a red-letter day for us. We kept our eyes glued to the television. Of course Lyndon was there at the site." Her face glowed with pleasure as she went on talking in the same strain for three or four minutes, with smiling nods of approval from LBJ.

When she had said her piece, the General felt it was his turn to speak. His wife, who was present, apprehended danger and tried to restrain him by tugging surreptitiously at his trousers. But the General was not to be stopped. He had heard the ADC mention the word "loop" and he thought the reference was to Lippes loop, the American device which was at that time being publicized widely as the answer to India's population problem.

The General therefore said solemnly: "Yes, Mrs Johnson I believe it has proved very effective in America." What did you say, Colonel?" She asked with a puzzled look. She addressed him as Colonel because the American President's personal staff have that rank. Mr Johnson flushed uncomfortably and looked at the General as though to apologize for his wife's gaffe. "General, not Colonel," he corrected her quietly. Lady Bird said: "I'm sorry. What did you say, General?" The General's wife shuffled her feet and sighed resignedly. Now it came with a bang. The General said in a voice that carried to all parts of the room: "I said that it has proved very effective in America and now your population has gone down."

Mr and Mrs Johnson looked uncomfortable. After this further conversation was impossible. It was time to put an end to the impromptu meeting. They excused themselves, saying they were very tired and had a long journey ahead. Then they hurriedly withdrew into their bedroom.

Goa and other Incidents

Eternal spirit of the chainless mind,
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty thou art—
For there thy habitation is the heart—
The heart that love of thee alone can bind.

7

The winter of 1961 was a busy time at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Foreign heads of state and other dignitaries from overseas were arriving in quick succession and all our attention was focused on them. Meanwhile, things were happening in the country. The early weeks of December saw military preparations under way to liberate Goa and its associated territories from 451 years of Portuguese colonialism.

The plan of attack was drawn up at Army Headquarters in New Delhi and orders went out to the Southern Command somewhere near Belgaum, a few miles from the Goa border. The imminence of military action caused a flurry in diplomatic circles throughout the world. Prime Minister Nehru received messages advising him to desist from armed action from nearly all the heads of government in the Western hemisphere. Only two months earlier, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had released a communique in Washington jointly with Portuguese Prime Minister Dr Salazar affirming that Goa was a province of Portugal.

New Delhi had set December 15 as D-Day. The railways had arranged for military specials to move to the Goa border uninterrupted. Seen from Rashtrapati Bhavan, the preparations New Delhi was making gave the impression that Goa was getting ready to invade India. Gen Kaul was the brain behind these massive preparations, and they caused not inconsiderable amusement as our information was that the Portuguese forces in Goa were only a brigade strong. Col Iqbal, Military Attaché of the Pakistan High Commission, jokingly asked an ADC why he had not gone to Goa. Troop movements in West Pakistan along the Indian border and Pakistani air activity over the "pimples" of Daman and Diu in Gujarat had aroused fears in Delhi that Pakistan might intervene militarily when the Indian action to throw the Portuguese out was launched.

We learnt that D-Day had been postponed from December 15 to 18. News of the postponement leaked out from certain embassies in New Delhi. Later, after the action was over

and Goa freed, it was learnt that even the Portuguese Governor-General in Panjim was aware that December 15 was the chosen day. The *Evening News* of December 17 gave no hint that *Operation Vijay*, as the "police action" was officially called, was coming the next day. It reported, however, that Nehru had written to President Eisenhower of the USA saying India could no longer stay its hand as the Portuguese atrocities in Goa—an integral part of India—were becoming intolerable.

There was an undercurrent of tension in Rashtrapati Bhavan as we had been reliably informed that the Army would march into Goa any time. Excitement mounted high when Nehru called on the President at 11.10 p.m. We came to know later that the President, Supreme Commander of the armed forces, had been told about the start of the operations two hours after their actual commencement. At a diplomatic function at Rashtrapati Bhavan a day or two later a foreigner asked what Gen Kaul was doing at the front. "I, a battalion commander, would refuse to have a senior commander with the rank of a general mucking about the front line," said the Military Attache of a Muslim country.

This was indeed a ridiculous situation militarily. It was to be repeated under graver circumstances in 1962. Brig (now Maj-Gen) Navin Rawlley was the sufferer in this instance. He was conducting operations as head of the 11 Brigade in the Walong sector in the Lohit Frontier Division of NEFA when Gen Kaul, the corps commander, who had once commanded the brigade, kept moving about the front line and getting in Rawlley's hair.

If the Goa operation proved anything it was how poorly India's military secrets are kept in New Delhi. Most diplomatic missions knew of India's intentions well in advance and they were also well posted about the actual happenings in the action against the Portuguese. It was even said at that time that the Indian Army's operational plan was in the hands of the Portuguese authorities in Goa long before the attack started.

Goa fell in two days with the capture of the Governor General. Maj-Gen K.P. Candeth, Commander of the 17 Division, accepted his surrender and was appointed Military Administrator of Goa, Daman and Diu. The President's grandchildren were jubilant at the news, and so was the President. But the military officers on his staff did not feel the same way. There was no sense of achievement, for the Portuguese were not foemen worthy of our steel. It was said that nobody runs away from a bullet faster than a Portuguese. Their troops in Goa were ill-equipped and had not prepared for a planned withdrawal in the event of an Indian attack beyond blowing up bridges spanning streams between the Indian border and the capital Panjim. Col Iqbal of the Pakistan High Commission said a brigade conducting a well-planned withdrawal operation would have delayed the attacking Indian forces at least 10 days. Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council would have come to Portugal's rescue and forced a ceasefire.

This may very well have been true. We overheard remarks at diplomatic parties to the effect that Nehru's image as an apostle of world peace had been shattered. It was also said that India had never solved any border dispute without a war. New Delhi had always resorted to arms when the logic of facts went against it. Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh earlier, and now Goa, were cited as examples. Foreigners also asserted that India would resort to arms against China to settle our border disputes with that country.

We made so much noise about the Goa operation when, militarily speaking, it was such a trivial affair. And in the United Nations our representative, Mr C.S. Jha, was blissfully ignorant of what was going on. The Government publicity machinery had failed to build up a favourable climate of opinion among the American intelligentsia, who were completely in the dark about the reason for the action. The Military Adviser to the Indian Embassy in Washington was called up early in the morning by the Ambassador to find out

what the Army was up to in Goa. Without any advance briefing from New Delhi the entire mission cut a sorry figure, and this too when special efforts should have been made to prepare it for what was coming in view of the Dulles-Salazar agreement a few weeks earlier.

There were few casualties in the operation, but I lost a good friend in Maj Sehgal. Out of sheer bravado he is said to have driven into a fort without protective elements and demanded that the commander of the garrison, a captain, surrender. The captain not only took him captive but shot him in cold blood.

At this point I shall recount an incident that occurred when the President was convalescing after his operation for stomach ulcer. He had been advised complete rest, and to relieve the boredom of his enforced inactivity religious films and dance and musical recitals were arranged for him at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

One day the President's Private Secretary called up ADC 1, who was on duty with the President, and told him that Ustad Bismillah Khan would perform on the shehnai before him at 4.30 that afternoon. ADC 1 promptly informed the President, who was greatly pleased that this maestro of North Indian instrumental music was going to entertain him. Mattresses and pillows for the President to recline on were assembled in the Fountain Loggia near the Ashoka Hall and a place for the musician was prepared in front of it. The Loggia's acoustics are particularly suited to the performance of instrumental music.

The Rashtrapati Bhavan clocks showed 4.15 p.m., but there was no sign of the Ustad. The worried ADC phoned the Private Secretary to find out if the performance was on or had been cancelled. She assured him it was on, and no sooner had he put down the receiver than a group of bare-bodied men carrying earthen pitchers materialized before his astonished eyes. But there was no sign of Bismillah Khan

among them.

At the tail-end of the group was a gentleman in lungi and kurta who from the name with which he introduced himself was obviously a South Indian. He said he had an appointment with the President at half past four. The ADC emphatically denied such an appointment, as the President expected Bismillah Khan at that time. The stranger smiled and said there was some confusion as he had explained at the inquiry office already. He said he was known as the Bismillah Khan of the South, and the appointment was really for him.

The President had to be informed of the mix-up, which was the fault of the Private Secretary. She should have made detailed inquiries from the organizers of the entertainment, but she was known to be notoriously casual in such matters. When her attention was drawn to what had happened, she disclaimed responsibility for it, and ADC 1 had the unpleasant task of going to the President and apologizing for the mistake. The President accepted the explanation graciously and consented to hear the virtuoso from the South.

Meanwhile, the maestro and his party had seated themselves in a semi-circle facing the *masnad* which had been prepared for the President. He was now wheeled in and transferred to this seat, where he stretched himself comfortably with a bolster to prop him up. The musical party rose when the President came in and took their places on the carpet laid out for them again after he had settled down.

I felt that the instrument the chief musician held in his hands, which I learnt later was a nadaswaram, was too close to the President. He put it to his lips and blew a blast directly at the President, who recoiled as if he had been struck. As the volume of the notes which followed swelled I saw the President shrinking farther and farther back. I was afraid the tension he was undergoing would bring on an attack of asthma and decided on drastic action. I went up to the performer, who was playing with his eyes shut, and snatched the instrument from his lips.

The player opened his eyes and stared aghast at me. Here he was trying to entertain the President as a mark of respect and I had rudely silenced him. I could see he was deeply hurt, but I had no alternative as in his weak condition the results could have been serious for the President. Quickly we put him back on the wheel-chair and took him to his bed-chamber. The presidential surgeon was immediately summoned, and Prasad told him that the "timely action of the ADC saved my life." Scarcely had I got back to my office when the maestro presented himself and asked for a certificate from the President expressing his appreciation of the recital.

President Arturo Frondizi of Argentina paid a state visit to India in the winter of 1961. He arrived in Delhi on December 4. Dr Prasad was convalescing after his illness and the acting President, Dr Radhakrishnan, received him at Palam. After the usual ritual of welcome they drove in state to Rashtrapati Bhavan through Connaught Place. I shared the front seat of the car in which Frondizi, his wife and Radhakrishnan travelled with the naval ADC of the Argentine President. Through an interpreter Frondizi asked Radhakrishnan whether the Indian rules for granting political asylum to outsiders were strict. Radhakrishnan said each case would be judged on its merit.

The Frondizis were a charming couple, and they treated the Indian aides-de-camp attached to them with consideration and kindness. Mrs Frondizi told me her daughter planned to visit India, her dreamland, in a month or so, and she was sure she would be looked after here as in her own home. Miss Frondizi arrived in Delhi a few weeks later and proved as charming as her parents. But at the same time ill fortune overtook her father in Buenos Aires. President Frondizi was called upon to resign by the president of the National Assembly with the help of the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Argentina. He was suspected of sympathizing with his predecessor in office, President Juan Peron, then

in exile, and the outlawed Peronists.

Frondizi refused to quit. In a message to the Argentina nation broadcast at night he said he was the constitutional head of state and could be removed only by constitutional means. The same night the guards of the presidential palace were withdrawn and the same ADC who had accompanied Frondizi to India was ordered to arrest him. The ADC did his duty, and the deposed President was flown to a secret island to join four of his predecessors, including Peron, in exile.

When the news of her father's downfall was broadcast by All India Radio Miss Frondizi was lunching with us at Rashtrapati Bhavan. She broke down in tears. As I watched her I was reminded of a story a liaison officer of our Ministry of External Affairs had told me. According to him a newspaper in a South American republic once carried this advertisement: "Wanted a food taster excellent pay residence free education children and state burial."

Dr Prasad was anxious to visit America while he was President. But this wish did not materialize, partly on account of his illness and partly for political reasons. Even after he retired he made an attempt to fulfil this desire, but death struck him down before he could get a firm invitation.

8

Second to None

To be noble is good, but to preach to others to be good is nobler and less trouble.

One of the unforgettable memories I cherish of Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's term as President was his receiving a memorandum at one of his evening durbars, when he entertained complaints from citizens, from an avowed terrorist on whose head the Indian Government had fixed a price. The wanted man was evading arrest and had lived underground for nearly two decades.

Radhakrishnan was not a politician. He was a savant whose published works had earned him universal recognition as a philosopher deeply versed in Indian culture. In this he was markedly different from another South Indian who held a position of the highest eminence in free India. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, who might have been the first President of India, was both a scholar and politician.

In the last days of the British Raj Radhakrishnan was inconspicuous politically. He was not even bracketed with such colourless leaders of little mass influence as Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar. He was known as an educationist and an interpreter of the ancient Hindu philosophers. He was, however, honoured among intellectuals in India and abroad who set a high price on scholarship. He was an Oxford don and accepted a knighthood from the King of Britain which he discarded when other Indians also shed their British titles.

Radhakrishnan played no role in the struggle for freedom. He watched it from far beyond India's shores, and if it roused any feelings of nationalism in him he did not exhibit them openly. There is nothing in his writings at that time to show what he thought of the movement for freedom which had burgeoned under Gandhi's leadership. Both as teacher and writer he kept his distance from the political turmoil in India in the period between the two world wars which culminated in independence in 1947. He expounded the shastras of the ancients for the benefit of the scholarly while Gandhi expounded for the benefit of ordinary Indians the strategy and tactics of the nonviolent struggle for freedom from colonial rule.

Radhakrishnan's political career, first as Vice-President from 1952 to 1962 and then as President from 1962 to 1967, was the handiwork of Nehru. Since in his view these offices were not politically important under the Indian Constitution which came into force in January 1950, he felt they could be most suitably filled by one who was far removed from politics and had attained renown in intellectual fields.

Radhakrishnan was a great orator in English. He held audiences spellbound. Every sentence he uttered was worthy of quotation. When Anthony Eden visited India as Prime Minister of Britain in the mid-1950's he was invited to address a joint session of the Houses of Parliament. He described later in his memoirs how his task was made more formidable by the enchantingly phrased introductory speech of Radhakrishnan, who as Vice-President was also Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. Eden wrote: "I felt like a little boy stumbling across a ploughed field after a leveret has shown its swiftly light paces."

Radhakrishnan was free India's first Ambassador to Moscow. He prided himself in attending state banquets and receptions in dhoti and achkan, with or without turban. He would eat none of the food that was served. Sometimes in the middle of a banquet he would get up, excuse himself to his hosts and leave. The Russians gradually accepted this unorthodox behaviour going against the rules of protocol, putting it down to philosophical eccentricity.

Once when I was accompanying him back to Rashtrapati Bhavan by car from a reception in Delhi Cantonment he gave me a detailed description of an interview he had with Stalin. He was the first foreign emissary accredited to the Soviet Government whose request for an interview with him was granted. After all the intricacies of diplomatic red tape had been overcome and the time of the interview had been fixed Radhakrishnan drove to the Kremlin. He was received by the Chief of Protocol of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This official conducted him through a maze of

corridors to Stalin's office.

Radhakrishnan described Stalin as a handsome man with a long mustache. The first question Radhakrishnan put to him was: "Mr Chairman, sir, why is it difficult to meet you?" When this was translated into Russian Stalin smiled and replied: "Is it difficult to meet me? You're meeting me now." With this the atmosphere in the room eased and they settled down to talk about political affairs. Radhakrishnan told me that at one point in their conversation he found an excuse to put his fingers in Stalin's hair and ruffle it. The interview lasted a record three hours. It created a diplomatic sensation in Moscow and other world capitals.

Radhakrishnan had a colourful personality. Intellectually, I think, Prasad was his equal, but while Prasad was shy and reserved Radhakrishnan was an extrovert and liked the sound of his own voice. One could, however, hardly blame him for that, for he was a fascinating conversationalist. He relished flattery, but who doesn't? If Prasad, whom Radhakrishnan described as the symbol of peasant India, was old wine, his successor was bubbling champagne, laced with acid wit. He was fair and ruddy-complexioned and meticulous about his dress. His achkan was well-tailored and his white turban immaculate. For one who was over 70 his activity was extraordinary, mentally and physically.

When Radhakrishnan took over as second President of India on May 13, 1962, he conferred the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, on the retiring head of state amidst loud applause at a joint session of the Houses of Parliament. Two days later Prasad quit Rashtrapati Bhavan for good and travelled in the special presidential train to Patna. The new President saw him off ceremoniously on the special presidential platform at New Delhi railway station. He also detailed some members of his personal staff to escort the ex-President to Sadaqat Ashram, where he had decided to spend his retirement.

After Dr Prasad's departure it was discovered that some of the

gifts he had received from foreign dignitaries were missing According to protocol, these were gifts to the President as head of state and not as an individual and should have been kept at Rashtrapati Bhavan as the property of the presidential estate and ultimately of the nation. What happened to these gifts? Some are said to have remained in Delhi in the possession of a member of his personal staff.

Radhakrishnan was greatly influenced in his thinking on affairs of state by Rajagopalachari. CR indeed moulded Radhakrishnan politically. Whenever the new President visited Madras he unfailingly called on CR at his home and paid his respects to him. As far back as 1942 CR had said partition of India was an inseparable condition of independence. He had advised Gandhi to accept this conclusion, but the advice was spurned and from that date CR was *persona non grata* to most of the Congress leaders. This is why they opposed Nehru when he wanted CR to become the republic's first President. CR differed from Nehru later on the creation of linguistic states, seeing in this step the seeds of national disintegration.

I recall CR as short and thin, almost emaciated, wisened with age but very agile. The President and he would huddle together in a small private room in CR's house in Kilpauk and talk for hours on end. CR's opposition to Nehru's policies at home and in international affairs was well known, for he made no attempt to hide it.

President Radhakrishnan's tenure as Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, his admiration for that country's economic and social achievements, his stay in Britain and personal knowledge of the USA all helped in creating a balanced relationship between India and these countries. Whenever he expressed an opinion on India's foreign policy it was neither pro-Soviet nor pro-West. But he seemed to feel that India's prosperity lay in aligning itself with the West. Probably the influence of CR, who was outspokenly pro-West, was at work here.

Perhaps conscious that he lacked a political image in the eyes of the Indian public and to remedy this defect Radhakrishnan announced, immediately after taking office on May 13, 1962, a cut in his salary from Rs 10,000 to Rs 3,000. (Incidentally, Prasad drew only Rs. 2,500 a month throughout his two terms.) The rest of Radhakrishnan's salary went to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. At the same time he announced that he would receive in person oral and written complaints from citizens every day at 5 p.m. Certain Government quarters viewed these efforts of the philosopher President to come down from his ivory tower and establish direct contact with the "masses" with scepticism. Nehru often used to ask him, not without a tinge of irony, how his daily durbars were going.

The frequency of these encounters were reduced after some time to twice a week. People who wished to see the President were lined up on the East Lawn or the Central Lawn in the following order: those who came merely for the President's darshan; down-and-outs who wanted money or other form of material help; poor students seeking scholarships to pursue their studies; petitioners in all walks of life mainly seeking redressal of wrongs. Occasionally there was an appeal from a wife begging for divorce from a cruel or unfaithful husband or one from the relatives of a criminal under sentence of death or long imprisonment asking the President to exercise his power of clemency.

At first the number of daily callers was about 2,000. But as people began to realize that the durbar was not very effective in getting them what they sought the callers dropped to a mere 60 or 70. A petitions committee was set up at Rashtrapati Bhavan with an ADC in charge of collecting the documents detailing grievances. These were sent to the authorities concerned through the office of the Secretary to the President. These authorities took their own time to look into them. I believe that effective action was taken in rare instances, but in most of them the upshot was adverse to the petitioners

because the departments concerned resented these appeals to the President. To have been really effective, it was not enough for Rashtrapati Bhavan to act as a post-office for transmitting the complaints. Machinery should have been set up to investigate the complaints and ensure speedy action where this was justified.

Needy students fared somewhat better. The President was able to use his personal influence to get some of them private scholarships to continue their work abroad or grants to do so in India.

Whether the petitions were dealt with satisfactorily or not, this experiment brought out the inadequacies of the administration and the judicial system and the high-handedness of certain ministries. We never received two petitions from the same source in Punjab. Chief Minister Pratap Singh Kairon saw to it that this "nonsense" stopped. It was said that he once summoned to his presence certain petitioners and gave them a piece of his mind. Their grievances immediately vanished.

The mercy petitions from the relatives of condemned men lying in jails in all parts of the country were pathetic, and sometimes also made sensational reading. The President never took a decision on his own on these appeals. He accepted the recommendation of the Union Home Ministry after the Supreme Court had turned down a judicial appeal. There was only one exception, when he commuted a death sentence to life imprisonment on his own. It was heartrending to listen to the wailing of the womenfolk and children of a man whose death on the gallows or prolonged incarceration would take away their only breadwinner. The President was depressed for days after rejecting an appeal for clemency. Among the notable appeals he rejected was that of Cdr Nanavati of the Indian Navy who was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of a Bombay businessman in 1959.

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Brezhnev's Visit—
Before and After

That Caravan of Rockets
Will speed us from star to star.
On the Milky Way
To faraway planets
Our traces will be ablaze.

9

Dr Radhakrishnan received Yuri Gagarin, the first man to hustle through space, when he visited India. At the time of the Russian's visit he was acting for Prasad, who was ill. Gagarin called at No 2 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Road, the official residence of the Vice-President, with his wife. He walked briskly to shake hands with Radhakrishnan. This short, stocky man with a baby smile looked like any young officer of the Indian armed forces. He was only 26 when chosen to make the first epochal flight into outer space.

Mrs Gagarin was very simply dressed in a typical Indian *jurah*. She looked like any lovely Indian housewife. The couple were accompanied by the Soviet Ambassador, Benediktov, the Soviet Air Attache in New Delhi and an interpreter. Gagarin described in simple terms for Radhakrishnan's benefit what it was like to travel into space. He said he felt there was a hollow in the pit of his stomach when he was shot into the outer atmosphere by rocket. The flight itself was like travelling in an ordinary airplane until he attained the state of weightlessness, an altogether unique experience. He said he had originally been scheduled to make two orbits round the earth, but the control station ordered him back to the earth after the first orbit and he landed with the help of a parachute.

Gagarin said little about the technicalities of space travel, and even what he said about his personal experiences on the trip was scanty. He did not say where the space station from which he took off was or which scientists had played an important part in making the flight possible. His feat was the result of a collective effort of the Russian people inspired by the ideals of Lenin, he declared. He later went to Rashtrapati Bhavan and paid his respects to the ailing President and met his family.

As I looked at Gagarin on these visits I thought that here was a man who would go down in world history as the pioneer of space flight. He had not only immortalized himself but had also brought lustre to his nation. I remembered Churchill's remark that we are all small men trying to do great

deeds, but here was a man small in physique who yet had attained a giant's stature in history. One did not have to be imposing physically to make history. Only deeds counted.

Some years later, Lal Bahadur Shastri, called "little sparrow," made history in a different way. I also recalled what one of Mrs Kennedy's aides had told me. He said Gagarin was not the first man in space. That honour belonged to another Russian, who, the American asserted, was still orbiting as the craft in which he went up could not be retrieved. According to one version of this story I heard, the unfortunate space traveller was the son of the well-known aircraft designer Ilyushin.

Radhakrishnan's tenure as officiating and installed President was marked by the state visits of many heads of state. Among them were President Brezhnev of the Soviet Union, the King of Laos, the Pertuan of Malaysia, the King of Greece, President Luebke of the Federal German Republic, the Presidents of Bulgaria, Lebanon, Mexico, Poland and Rumania, President Tito of Yugoslavia and Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus.

Other distinguished visitors included Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rehman of Malaysia, Prime Minister Ikeda of Japan, Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Ceylon, Wg Cdr Ali Sabry of the United Arab Republic, Prime Minister Michel Debre of France and Prime Minister Diefenbaker of Canada, Earl Attlee, British Commonwealth Secretary Duncan Sandys and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Brezhnev's visit was of particular interest to me. My impressions of the Soviet Union and its peoples were derived from paintings of scenes of the Russian Revolution of 1917 I had seen in exhibitions or from films. The dominant colour of these scenes was red, and they showed fighting types, strikingly tough. Brezhnev and his party were, on the other hand, sober, self-controlled and cultured. Brezhnev himself was stocky, handsome and bushy-eyebrowed, with a glint of

humour in his eyes.

The welcome the visitors received at Palam airport was very warm. The two Presidents travelled to Rashtrapati Bhavan in an open car. Brezhnev repeatedly referred to the very friendly welcome he had received. They kept standing to acknowledge the cheers of the large crowds which lined the drive from the airport, but after a while Radhakrishnan tired and sat down. Brezhnev continued to stand and look at the faces in the crowd. He remarked on the pretty face of a girl, and after the car had driven past her he turned back and kept looking at her.

As soon as they reached Rashtrapati Bhavan the two Presidents sat down to coffee in the Morning Room. After a few pleasantries Brezhnev remarked through an interpreter: "Mr President, you have been an Ambassador in Russia and you said you liked the country. Why have you not come again in spite of the many invitations extended to you?"

Radhakrishnan replied: "I am sorry. I have been too busy. You know after I left Russia my wife expired and therefore I have not been able to come."

Brezhnev: "But it is quite some time, and now you have time. I am sure we shall not have to reprimand you for not coping with our invitation." Perhaps the interpreter had translated Brezhnev wrongly, but the word "reprimand" seemed to nettle Radhakrishnan. Contracting his eyebrows and with a hint of tartness in his voice, he replied: "I will come to Russia only when I am sick. You have nice hospitals there." There was perhaps no further talk about a visit to Russia on the rest of Brezhnev's stay in New Delhi.

While driving from the airport Brezhnev expressed surprise at the kind of justice meted out in the United States. He was referring to the case of Carl Chessman, who had fought a legal battle over 12 years to get the repeal of a death sentence passed on him for trespass, rape and murder when he was 19. In jail Chessman had studied law and qualified to practise, written four novels and had argued his own case for remittance

of his sentence. Chessman failed in his bid and went to the gas chamber at Sing Sing.

Brezhnev remarked that "justice in America does not take a correct course." Radhakrishnan said, "I don't know," and then went on to narrate a story. A district commissar once visited a village school and asked a student who had written *Anna Karenina*. The student timidly replied that he had not done so. The commissar then asked the rest of the class the same question, and on not getting an answer went away with a poor impression of the school. The headmaster thought he should correct this impression. Accordingly he wrote to the commissar a week later saying: "The student voluntarily confesses that he wrote *Anna Karenina*." Radhakrishnan ended: "I do not know where justice takes a correct course."

Jacob Malik, Deputy Foreign Minister, accompanied Brezhnev. He had been Ambassador in London at the time of the Profumo scandal a few months earlier in which the Soviet naval attache was involved. Asked by a member of our staff about the affair, Malik said he had nothing to say except that it was a "nasty" matter.

Lord Mountbatten was a visitor at Rashtrapati Bhavan with his daughter Pamela, who had by then become Mrs Hicks. Her husband was an interior designer. I thought Mrs Hicks looked older than her husband. They were a jovial couple. I had heard that Mountbatten was a great friend of India and that it was because of his exertions that India was still in the Commonwealth. I had read Campbell-Johnson's *Mission with Mountbatten* and knew exactly how he felt about Rashtrapati Bhavan. I was not surprised when he went to every room with the ADC on duty and narrated incidents that had taken place in them. In the Cabinet Room he recalled that Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan had fought a verbal battle, at the height of which Jinnah and Liaquat had walked out. A year after

Mountbatten's visit I was to witness another historical confrontation which I shall describe later.

Immediately after becoming President, Radhakrishnan extended the term of an ADC from two years to two and a half. He formally approved an extension of service to all the aides and other members of his personal staff. We aides were treated almost like members of his family, and this led to much prejudice and jealousies among the senior staff. The arch-inspirer of this mischief was a petty-minded lieutenant-colonel. He was not only instrumental in causing bad blood between members of the staff but even tried to poison their relations with the President. On the other hand, Col Reddy, Deputy Military Secretary, was very conscientious and strove hard to maintain harmony in the presidential establishment. The President had special regard for Col Reddy and did not merely consider him as Deputy Military Secretary.

One Military Secretary did not find much favour with the President, and his relations with his staff were also far from happy. But he had a smart wife, belonging to a distinguished family. She drew admiration from all who met her for her social graces and impeccable ways as a hostess. She treated the aides-de-camp like her children and exerted a controlling influence on her husband when an aide got into trouble for doing wrong. In fact, she had the last word in all matters, and the aides regarded her as the virtual Military Secretary.

One interesting incident of this kind I recall concerned Rana Singh, the seniormost chauffeur responsible for driving the Prime Minister's car. Nehru was fond of him. He was charged with misbehaving towards a female telephone operator in making a call while allegedly under the influence of alcohol. He was suspended while an inquiry was held and another driver took his place. I came to learn that the charge had been trumped up by certain influential people who wanted to give the substitute driver the permanent job with the Prime Minister

They had reasons for doing this, as I came to learn through private inquiries. This driver was fluent in English.

Nobody among the high-ups was keen on defending Rana Singh against this false charge. He approached me for help and I undertook to defend him. The inquiry was a farce. The board appointed to conduct it had obviously been chosen to please some high-ranking persons and the conduct of some witnesses who testified against him was not above reproach. Ultimately the board held Rana Singh guilty by a majority of two to one and punished him under Civil Service Rules. The dissenting voice on the board was that of Capt Bhawani Singh of Jaipur, Adjutant of the President's Body Guard, who succeeded his father as Maharaja in July 1970. A letter from the Military Secretary to the Prime Minister's Secretary was placed before the board. It clearly said that the driver was to be suspended from service, without giving any reason for this action, and that an inquiry would be held.

The case went in appeal to the President. He in turn referred it to the Ministry of Law. While the Ministry was considering action, feelers were put out telling Rana Singh he would be reinstated, as a favour, if he apologized. At the same time Ministry officials were approached to confirm the board's decision. The Ministry not only rejected its findings but also reinstated Rana Singh with compensation for the unnecessary suffering and humiliation inflicted on him. I had a great sense of achievement and exhilaration, for I had helped to see justice done to a poor man. I believe this incident cost a senior General his job. He was sent on retirement, and no other official employment was offered him although it was customary to give holders of this office diplomatic assignments abroad.

President Mateos of Mexico came to India on October 6, 1962. The members of his party were a jovial lot. Foreign Minister Romero was exceedingly friendly. The Mexicans did not relish Indian food. They said there were not enough

chillies in it. ADC 3 occasionally found them frying beans in their bathrooms. This was embarrassing for us and we reported the matter to the Comptroller, Col Singh. But he did not do anything about it. He said: "If they don't like our food they can lump it."

At the customary meeting over coffee in the Yellow Room the President's staff were introduced to the Mexicans. Mateos praised the exquisite works of art in the room. Looking at them, he recalled an incident on a state visit to Washington. He said his wife had admired President Kennedy's watch when they were being entertained at the White House. Kennedy immediately took it off and offered it to her. The embarrassed Mrs Mateos refused to accept it, saying she did not mean he should give it to her but had merely admired it because it was so attractive and unusual. Kennedy replied that it was a custom in his country that anything belonging to the host admired by a guest should be offered to the guest as a memento. "I got the message," Mateos added, "and spent the rest of the evening admiring Mrs Kennedy." As the party wore on Kennedy grew more and more uncomfortable at the attention his chief guest was paying his wife. Just after the banquet was over he went up to Mrs Mateos and said politely: "May I have my watch back, madam? I can't afford giving it to you."

President Luebke of West Germany visited India on November 26, 1962. After the customary reception for a foreign head of state the President entertained him privately. It was always a matter of curiosity to me what heads of state said to each other when they met informally. On this occasion, the President opened the conversation by saying, "So Capt Datta is on duty with us today" after signalling me to sit beside Mrs Luebke. Then he added: "How distinguished my aides-de-camp look." Luebke commented: "You have very smart young officers on your staff." He went on to describe at length the staff of Count Bismark, the Iron

Chancellor who created modern Germany, and said he had selected the smartest officers in the Kaiser's army. But he himself had no military men on his staff, Luebke said.

Their conversation switched to Radhakrishnan's speech at Hamburg on his last tour of West Germany. He had emphasised in it that the world was passing through a crucial phase. But he was optimistic that a new world order would emerge when the prevailing troubles got sorted out. As we sat over soft drinks in the sitting room of the Dwarka Suite Radhakrishnan said: "My contention has always been that economic unity will be a good check on the minor, petty jealousies between nations. The day de Gaulle went to Germany and shouted 'long live Franco-German friendship' was the greatest in the history of these two nations, especially because it had been said that if these two nations did not fight this would be contrary to their history. The wars of 1870, 1914 and then 1939 were a shameful blot on the history of these nations."

Luebke: "Yes, indeed, for we German people have been subjected to the horrors of war for the last century or so and now economic unity will prevent future wars, I hope. But what is the guarantee that the bad neighbour will be good? Bad neighbourliness is the real reason for the petty jealousies and conflicts between the two nations."

Radhakrishnan: "Yes, the day we stop interfering with others' private affairs and be good neighbours economic and political unity is bound to increase." He was referring to the European Common Market and Luebke added: "After joining ECM Britain might neglect the Commonwealth." Radhakrishnan rejoined: "Well, they will join anyway." The informal chat ended at this point as it was time to proceed to the Banquet Hall.

On King Mahendra of Nepal's visit to India in April 1963 the question of the "objectionable" behaviour of an Indian diplomat attached to the Embassy in Kathmandu was raised.

At this time Nepal and China were on excellent terms and the Nepalese Government was adopting political postures which pleased Peking vastly and correspondingly irritated New Delhi. The King requested Nehru to recall the diplomat. M.J. Desai, Secretary-General to the Ministry of External Affairs, was present at the discussion and said that whenever the Nepalese Government had internal problems it picked on India as a scapegoat. This silenced Mahendra. Meanwhile Nepal's treaty on postal and telegraphic communications with India was pending renewal. But Nepal forged agreements with China for undertaking several projects, including a cement factory near the border of the Chumbi Valley.

As I mentioned earlier Radhakrishnan was keen on building a public image for himself. After assuming the presidency he freely expressed his personal views on political issues and privately sought support for them. He nursed an ambition to play an independent role in national politics. Nehru, however, showed little respect for opinions which went counter to his. Soon it became obvious to us at Rashtrapati Bhavan who kept our eyes and ears open that the President and Prime Minister were not hitting it off. There were growing signs of friction and their relations became stiffly formal.

In private conversation Radhakrishnan criticized caustically the Government's handling of national problems. He frequently referred to the warnings of approaching disaster he had given Nehru when he was Vice-President or still earlier when he was Ambassador to the Soviet Union. He declared he had once told Nehru that his support of Sheikh Abdullah would land him in difficulties. He said: "I told him to remove Sheikh Abdullah from Kashmir, put him in the Centre as Education Minister, send Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim to Kashmir as Sadr-i-Riyasat and make the present Sadr-i-Riyasat Yuvraj Karan Singh Prime Minister of Kashmir. The Muslims of Kashmir would be happy as they would have a Muslim head of state and their beloved Abdullah would be

at the Centre as a minister while the real control of the state would lie in the hands of his own man. Jawahar turned down this suggestion. Look at the results. They have spoilt and mishandled Sheikh Abdullah to such an extent that it is too late for the Government to reform him." He also blamed Nehru for agreeing to a ceasefire in Kashmir in 1948 because he was more concerned about world opinion than his own interests at home.

Day by day the encounters between President and Prime Minister became less cordial. If Nehru appeared late at an at-home Radhakrishnan looked pointedly at his watch. What little agreement they had on political issues gradually disappeared, and a yawning gulf was evident when Chinese attacked India in the autumn of 1962. The President was about to take his departure from an open-air at-home and it was customary for the Prime Minister to wish him before he left. Nehru was lost in the crowd at the other end of the lawn. The Military Secretary directed me to inform him that the President was leaving. I went up to Nehru and said: "Sir, the President is about to leave." Nehru stared at me and snapped: "So what? You are his ADC, not I." Then he suddenly smiled and put his hands on my shoulders from behind. I led him through the crowd to where the President was waiting.

As the Chinese thrusts along the northern border became fiercer the rift between the two men widened.

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[illegible] Chinese [illegible] border [illegible] the rift between the two men widened.

The Yellow Storm

The frog at the bottom of the well thinks that the horizon consists of only the sky he can see through the circumference.

10

From the time of the fresh intrusions of armed Chinese into Indian territory in the eastern sector, along the border of the Northeast Frontier Agency, on September 8, 1962, the nation was gripped by fear of the Yellow Peril. The Chinese as a people, their methods of diplomacy, the strength of their armed forces and their intentions towards India became the topic of the day. At Rashtrapati Bhavan we spent most of our time discussing these subjects. Curiously, as the Chinese started nibbling at our territory with increasing boldness, luxury restaurants in Connaught Place which served Chinese food started describing them as Burmese, Southeast Asian or Far Eastern.

When the Communists assumed complete control over mainland China in 1949 after 22 years of civil war the People's Army had a hotch-potch of equipment, ranging from rifles to aircraft of all types. Some of it was of American origin, obtained when units of the defeated Kuomintang armies went over lock, stock and barrel to the victorious Communists. After the war and the establishment of a new Chinese Government in Peking, the People's Army was reorganized on the Soviet pattern, trained by Soviet experts and equipped with Soviet weapons. Alongside reorganization and modernization went the ideological indoctrination of the troops.

The fighting qualities of this reconditioned military machine were first tested under modern conditions of warfare in Korea. The Chinese soldier emerged scarred but more self-confident than ever after facing the formidable firepower of 16 Western and pro-Western nations. Fighting ceased almost where it had begun—on the 38th parallel of latitude.

Officers and men of the Indian Army came for the first time in contact with the new People's Army in 1954 when an Indian Chairman headed the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission in Korea. Here was an opportunity to study Chinese military theory and practice at first hand, but unfortunately it was not utilized. At that time India's defence strategy did not envisage confronting a powerful adversary

at high altitudes on the ground or in the air and hence no preparations were made in time for the dangers that were to follow. At that time national defence was based on the belief that the northern Himalayan wall was impregnable, this when the Chinese were carefully building a first-class fighting machine based on the lessons of the Korean War and prepared for warfare in all types of conditions.

Chinese military missions visited various countries, including India, and much of what they saw was incorporated in the strategic and tactical concepts of the People's Army, which had expanded to about 7 million combatants, specialists and logistical support after Korea. This huge war machine was backed by a militia of 30 million landbased and trained to provide the infrastructural demands of internal security and intelligence. The Chinese Air Force also expanded immediately after the Korean War. Training and equipment was provided by the Russians, and the Chinese later went in for production of MiG interceptor aircraft. Great encouragement was paid to gliding and millions of young Chinese men and women became air minded.

The Chinese Communists believed in exporting revolution. They were irrevocably committed to socialism and the overthrow of imperialism. The People's Army was regarded as the instrument for executing political policies which were vital to spreading communism. Compromises were at times necessary—but solely to further grand strategic design. They believed compromises and negotiations served the purpose of gaining time, to buttress a military, political, social or economic position and to wear down, frustrate and harass an enemy.

The Chinese Government entered into a treaty with the British Government in India to demarcate the northeastern boundary. This agreement was reached at a conference in Simla on April 27, 1914 and was initialled by the representatives of China, Tibet and Britain. Afterwards the Chinese withdrew from the conference and refused to ratify the treaty. At the

conference the Tibetan representative conceded the overall authority of China over Tibet as the suzerain power.

For Tibet's good fortune, internal strife plagued China for many years after 1914 and the revolutionary regime of Sun Yat Sen was never able to establish effective suzerainty over Tibet. But several political missions were sent to Lhasa and by this means cordial relations were preserved up to 1930 between China and Tibet. There followed three years of hostilities, and when they ended the actual relations between the two countries gave no indication of China's rights, even as a suzerain, in Tibet.

After the death of the Dalai Lama on December 17, 1933, political power in Lhasa passed into the hands of a pro-Chinese regent named Hutukhtu. The Chinese seized this opportunity to send a high-powered mission to Lhasa in April 1934 to set down their rights in concrete terms. A treaty was concluded, the main provisions of which were:

(1) Tibet was a part of China and the Tibetans must recognize this by subordinating their Government to that of the Central Government in China.

(2) The Chinese Government would be responsible for Tibet's defence, foreign relations and communications.

(3) The final approving authority in appointing high Tibetan officials would be the Chinese Government.

Not very long after civil war broke out in China, and the Kuomintang regime headed by Chiang Kai-shek had its hands full fighting the Japanese and the Communists under Mao Tse-tung and its own rebellious warlords. Tibet was once again left very much to itself until the Communists established themselves unchallenged in Peking in 1949.

It is significant that neither the Kuomintang nor the succeeding Communist Government recognized the Simla Pact defining the India-Tibet border in the northeast as the MacMahon Line joining the water sheds at the crest of the highest

mountains. They denied they had signed the pact establishing this line as the border and denounced it as a product of British imperialism. Some time later, however, they signed a border agreement with Burma based on the MacMahon Line as defined at Simla. The Chinese maintained that the actual border between India and Tibet ran along the southern slopes of the high Himalayan ranges and not along the crests.

Chinese troops inched their way southward surreptitiously. When these incursions were noted and New Delhi protested Peking took cover behind their old map of the border region. It was said that "the Chinese People's Government hasn't had time to revise their maps." The Nehru Government, with its sights set on developing a long-lasting friendship with China, took no further action to halt these encroachments. Instead, it allowed itself to be lured in 1954 into a treaty recognizing Peking's claim to Tibet. By that time the Chinese had built roads linking western Tibet with Sinkiang across the Aksai Chin area of Ladakh. They had occupied large chunks of Indian territory and set up military posts in them to strengthen their claims.

One foggy morning in the barren lands of Ladakh, "where not a blade of grass grows" Nehru once explained to soothe alarmed members of Parliament, a routine Indian patrol trudged along a rocky pass gasping for breath. As they neared a crucial bend in the Kong Ka pass a burst of light machine-gun fire supported by hand grenades exploded all round them. Thirteen Indians were killed there, and with them died *Panchsheel*, the agreement on five principles of peaceful coexistence India and China had signed in 1954. Among other things the agreement guaranteed mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity. This bloody incident occurred near a road the Chinese had constructed 112 miles south of the border of western Tibet, deep in Indian territory.

The Government of India woke up to the Chinese menace early in 1960. Patrolling of the vulnerable border areas was intensified, and the border itself was manned all the year

trary, that China would never wage war against India or turn hostile. Such behaviour had no historical precedent, and China had not taken up arms against India for more than a thousand years. This period saw many cultural exchanges between the two nations, but they had very little military contact. Nehru and other Indian policymakers who thought like him held the view that China was engaged in a grim struggle to retrieve whatever it could from the ravages of war. It had millions of hungry mouths to feed and its leaders would accordingly be fully preoccupied with developing agriculture and industry and would therefore have no time to think of war with any other country, least of all India. The Chinese intervention in Korea, they argued, arose from sheer political necessity. Nehru felt he knew the key men in the Chinese Government to be certain they meant no evil to India in spite of the warnings of those who thought differently.

Thus when in the early 1950s the vital issue of national defence was debated the question that invariably cropped up was: Defence against whom? China as an enemy was ruled out, and Pakistan was pinpointed as India's main foe. Thus the whole machinery of defence, its organization and strategic and tactical planning, was geared to defence against Pakistan, not China. The theory of the impregnable Himalayan fortress continued to be accepted as an act of faith, the treaty on Tibet in 1954 was signed in keeping with the desire for long-lasting peace with China. No military cognisance was taken of the Chinese map showing Indian territory as part of China. The excuse that Peking had had no time to prepare new maps because of more important preoccupations was accepted, little realizing that when the adjustments came to be made they would show even more Indian territory as Chinese.

Since Pakistan had been publicly declared the main source of danger to India, New Delhi's policies as well as defence preparedness were geared to meet this threat.

However, Indian Army held on to obsolete values. While

serving with the U.N., the army personnel, including other ranks and officers, were paid $25. Our Army headquarters staff had a duel with the Indian Army authorities in Congo to urge the U.N. command for upholding the disparity of the allowances, i.e. officers must get $25 and other ranks $20, and below proportionately according to rank.

The height also seems to be affecting the Indian Army's health by ranks. One battalion commander put forward the suggestion that height only affects the health; it should not affect the rank. Hence the allowance should be given according to age, i.e. Subedar Major probably getting the highest. The battalion commander was pulled up by the brigade commander for jeopardizing the interest of officer class.

The cult of personality in the armed forces as well as in civil service was gaining importance. Laying down "ban-dobast" for the VIP and thus gaining favours seemed to be the order of the day.

When the Chinese incursions increased the Government was caught totally unprepared to cope with it. In fact, the Government had known as far back as 1958 that the Chinese were squatting on Indian soil and had swallowed 12,000 square miles in Ladakh, but it had kept this very damaging information to itself. It is also on record that Gen Kulwant Singh and Gen Thimayya, then GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, had drawn the Government's attention to the military implications of the Chinese trespasses. Thimayya's warnings foreshadowed the approaching hostilities of October 1962. But these danger signals were ignored.

China regarded Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, NEFA and Ladakh as the five fingers of a hand, and its palm was Tibet. These fingers must close to form a fist as a defence against the expansionist aims of American imperialism, Peking's policy-makers said. On the other hand Washington looked on the Indian subcontinent from the point of defence as an integral

whole and argued that its defence against communist penetration demanded the closest military collaboration between India and Pakistan. The official American point of view was. "We are not interested in the defence of Pakistan or India separately in case of war with China. You cannot defend NEFA if the hostile bayonets of East Pakistan are at your back and Pakistan has the capability to cut across a 25-mile opening to Sikkim through the Chumbi valley. You cannot defend Ladakh if the land routes through the Kashmir valley lie within 63 miles of Pakistan. To satisfy this military necessity it is incumbent on you and Pakistan to come to terms, Kashmir being the sore point between the two countries." This was also the official British view.

It is interesting to note that on taking over the administration of Pakistan in October 1958 Gen Ayub Khan proposed a plan for the joint defence of the subcontinent to India. Instead of the Indian and Pakistan armies facing each other in hostile postures why should they not face outwards? The real enemy of the two countries lay across their northern borders. "Defence against whom?" Nehru brusquely demanded. From then Pakistan deliberately set out to woo China on one hand and to grab as much military aid as possible from the West on the other. The gulf between India and Pakistan widened, particularly over Kashmir. Simultaneously China and Pakistan drew nearer each other to achieve their political ambitions against India.

I have already noted that the Indian Army was told to carry out the policy of Cheek on the basis of makeshift arrangements. The military authorities realized it was difficult to execute this policy on the ground, but they did not drive this home to the Government in 1960 or 1961. These were very crucial years for India's defence preparedness, when the fullest attention should have been paid to training, equipping and deploying the manpower required to hold our vulnerable land frontiers against all corners.

But this was also a period of personal conflict between Defence Minister Krishna Menon and Army Chief of Staff Thimayya. It was also a period of attempted military coups all round India—in Burma, Ceylon, Iran, Iraq, Laos, Syria and Thailand. Further, it was a period when the burning question in Indian politics was "After Nehru, who?" These considerations may have influenced the political thinking of the nation's leaders. This was a period when mediocrities were pushed up to the top in the Army and the other services filling the place of retiring officers who were not afraid to pose embarrassing questions on the strength of their military expertise to the civilian authority. In a way these promotions were designed to provide an answer to the question who would succeed Nehru.

In this process it was quite on the cards that an extremely ambitious general could exploit his political and social connections to work his way into a key position in the military hierarchy. Menon seems to have woken up belatedly to this danger some time in September or October 1962. Nevertheless, he appeared determined not to let the question of the succession to Nehru to be settled to his own disadvantage. While these political tensions were mounting in New Delhi, the all-important task of building up a fighting machine capable of standing up to an invader was bound to be neglected. It did not call for remarkable acumen for this to be realized in Peking.

From the time the Dalai Lama sought refuge in India in March 1959 the tempo of border incidents and China's erosion of Indian territory rose steadily. Unidentified air craft flew over India frequently, unexplored regions of NEFA hummed with Chinese voices. Khinzemane in the eastern sector and Longju in Subansiri Division were occupied in August 1960. A report of the confabulations between Indian and Chinese officials on the boundary question was published. The world came to know the Chinese had occupied a large chunk of India

territory and claimed an area several times larger in NEFA. The Chinese struck in force, taking Monpa in Kameng Frontier Division and Chem-karpo La in the eastern sector. India offered a protest, but the Chinese ignored it. By June 1962 the harassment of Indian pilgrims, traders and others in Tibet started on a large scale. New Delhi suggested maintenance of the status quo along the northern border, but Peking would have none of this.

On September 8, 1962, the Chinese crossed the Thag La ridge in NEFA. This intrusion finally shook Nehru's belief in the possibility of coming to a settlement with Peking through diplomacy. The nation's confidence in him was also shaken. The Chinese made massive intrusions in NEFA and Ladakh on the night of October 19/20, 1962. Nehru was the first casualty of the war.

The hospitals were also soon full of casualties from the battle fronts in NEFA and Ladakh. There was one second lieutenant, later awarded the Mahavir Chakra, who as a forward observation officer at a post in Ladakh invited the fire of his own guns at his position when it was surrounded by Chinese. He was hospitalized with practically no arms or legs. What was left of him was a mass of bandages, out of which only his eyes were visible. When the President visited this hospital he placed his hand affectionately on the injured man's forehead. The eyes which had been listless till then turned wet. This young man reconciled himself to the amputation of his limbs. Ironically, he was offered help for artificial limbs not by India but from West Germany. The Germans not only flew him to Europe at their expense but also fitted him with the latest type of limbs free of cost.

Ripples

If you lose an argument you can still call your opponent names.

It may be strange—yet who
Would change Time's course
to slower speeding.
When one by one our friends
have gone
And left our bosoms bleeding.

11

From the time the 4 Corps was formed in NEFA the House, as we used to call Rashtrapati Bhavan, hummed with activity. Everybody including the President was aware of the impending danger of conflict with the Chinese. On October 14 he told the United Chamber of Trade Associations at Azad Park in Old Delhi that India was prepared to negotiate with the Chinese on the basis of the conditions existing before September 8, 1962. He did not elaborate on this statement. As soon as he got into his car after the meeting he asked: "That was a very fair proposal, don't you think so?" He seemed to be having second thoughts. He had made a major policy statement without consulting the Prime Minister. He might have discussed the matter earlier with Nehru, but it was apparent that he felt he had no authority to make such a proposal at that crucial juncture.

Throughout the short drive back to Rashtrapati Bhavan he kept referring to this proposal wondering how Nehru would react to it. Immediately on arriving at the House he sent for his son, Dr Gopal, head of the Historical Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, and Mr Prem Bhatia, the well-known political commentator. Bhatia had a big say in moulding the President's views on political developments and personalities. He answered the President's summons and retired with him and Dr Gopal to the presidential study.

Bhatia is believed to have roused the President's apprehensions about the reactions of the Chinese and of Nehru to his statement in Old Delhi. While they were closeted in the study Nehru turned up at the House un-announced. He had heard about the statement. In a broadcast over All India Radio on October 22 Nehru supported the offer to which, however, there was no response from Peking. Throughout the Chinese invasion the President made no more statements on this issue except the official announcement of a state of national emergency on October 26.

An operation room was maintained at Rashtrapati Bhavan to keep the President posted with the latest developments in

the fighting. Reports were collected from Army Headquarters and passed on to him. The President showed a remarkable understanding of military operations, and to me he appeared a curious combination of statesman, philosopher, politician and army staff officer. He revealed in these times of great tension a very clear brain which could sift complex facts and evaluate them independently.

The President and his son were keen on knowing about the capabilities of the generals commanding forward formations in NEFA and Ladakh. Gen Kaul was a hot topic of discussion. On October 11 he was flown back to Delhi from Tezpur with a high temperature and pneumonia. He called on the President the next day with a muffler wrapped round his neck, coughing furiously and bringing up phlegm. It is believed that he told him that the earlier estimates of Chinese military strength in the vital border areas were wrong. His own were that they were four to six divisions strong in NEFA and five in Ladakh and had about five in reserve. Their airfield at Gartok, in Southern Tibet, could be used by jet bombers to strike at Delhi and India would be able to do nothing to prevent it.

Kaul went back to his post on October 13 only to return again sick on October 18. The Chinese, alleging "provocation," moved into Indian positions on the Nankachu river on the night of October 20. They cut the Indian position between the third and fourth bridges across the river and surrounded the 2 Rajputs and the 1/9 Gurkha Rifles. They seized the second and third bridges and occupied the brigade headquarters of Brig Dalvi.

At midnight the President summoned me and asked me to look at the teleprinter installed in the House and give him the latest news of developments along the front. The machine said all was quiet at Dho La post in Ladakh except for intermittent firing. I was just about to turn away to convey this information to the President when a flash came on the teleprinter. It read: "Please hold on for important war news."

I stood impatiently by the machine, while it was idly chattering, waiting for the big news. Finally it spelt out at 35 minutes past midnight: "Chinese Frontier guards made a massive attack simultaneously at NEFA and in Ladakh sector Indian Army falls back at all positions."

Neither the President nor his staff slept all night. Early next morning Nehru came to see him, followed by Dr Zakir Husain, the Vice-President, Mr Swaran Singh, and Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri. The Chief of Staff, Gen Thapar, had flown to NEFA. The conference of state Governors at the House was adjourned. Everybody looked grim. Nehru seemed suddenly to have grown old. The atmosphere in the highest political and official circles was not one to inspire confidence. "What is happening to the Indian Army?" was the question heard from a hundred lips. The news from the front in the next three days brought a further lowering of morale. Thapar's briefing of the President after returning from NEFA on October 23 was very discouraging.

There were some people in high places who exhibited little understanding of what was taking place on the battlefield or behind the scenes. They had never heard the whine of bullets whizzing past their ears in their lives and could not therefore visualize the hazards our ill-equipped frontline troops were undergoing for the sake of national security. All that mattered to them was that the Chinese were advancing and the Indian Army was falling back without a fight. Why they were falling back was not a matter that gave their rubbery consciences even a twinge. But if the man in uniform was not prepared for the Chinese onslaught who was to blam?

There was a senior Minister, shaken to the core by the quick succession of catastrophic events, drenched in strong-smelling perfume, perpetually chewing betel and spitting here and there with little consideration where his spittle landed. He put such questions to those who were willing to listen to him as who was more senior, a colonel or a captain, and which was bigger, a brigade or a corps. He also wanted to know, in his

new-found thirst for knowledge of military affairs, whether our troops were equipped with a certain type of rifle. We had to answer these questions with straight faces, hiding our amusement and pity at such ignorance. But the Minister himself did not ask these questions out of a sense of ignorance but to exhibit to his listeners his profound knowledge of the Indian Army, in which he was acquainted with many "havildars."

The chosen few who had the destiny of the nation in their keeping should have served in the Army and faced live bullets. Then they would have realized what war really was. Only then could they have risen to the occasion and stood shoulder to shoulder with the men in uniform in defending India in its hour of peril. Until this consciousness is created the politicians will never realize the plight of an army without proper equipment and training on the field of battle.

Aware of the shortcomings of the Government in equipping the Army with modern weapons much before the enemy struck and having failed in diplomatic moves to stall the Chinese invasion, certain sections of the ruling elite were trying to drive a wedge between officers and men. These mischief-mongers whispered loudly that our poor showing in the field was due to the faulty leadership of the officers and not to poor equipment which lowered the morale of the troops. This was being said not only by members of the Nehru Government but also by people very close to the President. Radhakrishnan himself asked on one occasion whether a certain junior commissioned officer had refused to go behind the enemy lines to recover the bodies of his comrades on the plea that this would unnecessarily swell the list of casualties.

One cannot understand peace unless one understands war and has been through it. When the Government's diplomatic ploys failed and the border problem got out of hand the Army was called upon to clean up the mess. When it failed against overwhelming odds it was blamed for being unable to cope with a situation which was largely the making of the politicians.

The destiny of the nation was unfortunately in the hands of people who professed to believe in non-violence and of genuine idealists who abhorred war as a means of settling international disputes. The failure to meet and turn back the invading Chinese was sought to be explained away by such fatuous statements as "success in war does not mean victory for right." This posture of many of our leaders gave other nations the impression that we wanted the "peace of the meek" when peace has meaning only when it comes from strength and not weakness.

A Defence Council was set up in New Delhi with Nehru as Chairman. Mrs Indira Gandhi, Defence Minister Menon and other prominent political figures were members. On the military side were Gen Thimayya, Gen Kulwant Singh and Gen Thorat. Gen Cariappa, the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Army, was curiously left out. He felt he should have been in it and flew to Delhi the day after the composition of the council was announced and offered his services to Nehru. They were not accepted, though one would have imagined that a former officer with wide field experience and high esteem among the troops would have been welcomed in a grave national emergency. Perhaps it was his popularity with the enlisted men and officers which caused him to be cold-shouldered.

Ambassadors Benediktov of the Soviet Union and Galbraith of the USA were frequent callers on the President in those days of crisis. Other occasional visitors were the envoys of West Germany, the United Arab Republic, Iran, Burma, Britain and Ceylon. Menon was constantly harping on Moscow's neutral stance in the dispute, when presumably it should have supported Communist China, and the military aid it was giving India. This aid consisted of six MiG-21 interceptors, of which three were coming in a completely knocked down condition by sea. The Soviet Government put out a statement through Tass giving its point of view.

After explaining why it was friendly to India, it concluded that Moscow considered "the settlement of this conflict through peaceful negotiations between our Chinese brothers and the friendly peace-loving Indian people would conform to the interests of world peace." By calling the Chinese brothers and the Indians friends Moscow was hardly keeping the balance even as Menon tried to argue.

Baulked of large-scale military aid from the Soviet Union, New Delhi perforce turned to the Western powers. The response was swift. Military missions came from the USA and Britain to India, the first under Gen Paul Adams and the second under Gen Hull, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The Americans sent C-130 transports from Japan loaded with 7.62-millimetre rifles. At a diplomatic reception at the House on October 25 the Pakistani High Commissioner Aga Hilaly was heard telling an official of our External Affairs Ministry: "Look at the quantities of arms that are coming to India. A mountain is being made of a molehill: This is awful. It will all be used against Pakistan."

Pakistan tried to persuade Turkey not to permit American transports bringing military supplies from North Atlantic Treaty Organization bases to India to use Turkish airfields. This advice was heeded by Ankara, and consequently the Americans had to fly supplies from their bases in the Pacific to Calcutta through Hongkong.

When three C-130s touched down at Dum Dum the sergeant in charge stepped out of one of the aircraft to find a galaxy of red-tabbed officers waiting to receive the arms. The sergeant remarked: "There seems to be a real emergency round here, not at the front."

The American and British military missions virtually used the House as their headquarters. Discussions with their counterparts at Army HQ were held in the Cabinet Room. Lt-Gen Moti Sagar was Chief of General Staff and was mainly responsible for the immediate planning of defence measures against the invader in those crucial hours. Both delegations

found the Indian shopping list of military hardware too big for the immediate needs. Secondly, diplomatic pressure was exerted on India to cut its requirements and to come to terms with Pakistan on Kashmir. The proposals of the two missions were based on joint India-Pakistan defence of the subcontinent against Chinese aggression. The Indian Government received suggestions from some foreign sources that it agree to trade Kashmir for East Pakistan.

The negotiations for military aid ended in an agreement with the American delegation on November 14 and with the British on November 27. Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand and West Germany sent weapons, equipment and clothing. Malaysia was, however, the only nation to come out unequivocally in support of India without gifting arms.

The President visited Tezpur on November 8. His visit was supposedly a well-guarded secret. It took place at the time the Chinese had overrun Tawang Jung after a bitter fight with the 4 Garhwalis. This battalion carried out a well-planned rearguard manoeuvre and joined the rest of the defensive network in Se La. A brigade defended Se La under Brig Hoshiar Singh. Divisional HQ were located at Darang Zong with the 19 Marathas of 65 Brigade as protection battalion. Maj-Gen Pathania was the divisional commander. Below Bomdi La was a brigade under Brig Gurbux Singh comprising the 1 Madras, 1 Sikh Light Infantry and 5 Guards.

The President took off in the early hours of the morning of November 8 from Tezpur by helicopter and went to Darang Zong. He saw the war casualties and met Kaul and Pathania. He asked Pathania: "What will the Chinese do next?" Pathania replied: "The Chinese will make a detour from Poshing La down to Bomdi La and possibly set up a roadblock between Darang Zong and Bomdi La."

At Tezpur the President remarked that India had been brought to this position because of the "credulity and negli

gence" of the Government. It needed no deep insight to realize that the morale of the troops was very low at the time of his visit. But their eyes lit up when they saw him in their midst. We had definite information that in spite of the precautions we had taken the President's visit to Tezpur was known to the Chinese. This was confirmed when, on his return to New Delhi the same day, Radio Peking announced his visit in its evening newscast.

Seven days later, on November 16, the Chinese did exactly what Pathania had predicted. A 40-member patrol of the 5 Guards under Capt Amarjit (Chippy) Singh, who had belonged to my old battalion in the guards, was sent to Poshing La to find out about enemy movements and strength in the Poshing La-Bomdi La axis and harass them. Chippy took his patrol within three miles of Poshing La and it was fired upon by the Chinese. He had hardly time to dig in when the Chinese overwhelmed the patrol. Chippy was among the casualties. His orderly buried him under a bush and brought away his camera, watch and transistor radio.

The Chinese advanced towards Bomdi La and hit the main 48 Brigade position with brigade strength on November 17/18. There was confusion over the fate of Se La. It is said that divisional HQ under Pathania had moved after instructing Hoshiar Singh, commanding the 62 Brigade, to withdraw. But no definite orders for withdrawal seem to have been passed on to the battalions and every commander made his own decision.

The Chinese set up roadblocks at Bomdi La and Darang Zong and simultaneously struck at the defended points at Bomdi La. The 5 Guards under Col Jai Singh fought well against enormous odds north of Bomdi La, though at that time it was accused of surrendering its positions to the Chinese without a fight. Short of ammunition and without clear orders from brigade or higher formations, the battalion was told to fix bayonets and fight its way out. Meanwhile, divisional

HQ barely escaped capture before the Chinese set up the road-block. They were rescued from this fate because of the valour of the 19 Marathas. The captain of a light armoured unit stationed somewhere between Bomdi La and Rupa claimed to have made a valiant stand with a group of tanks and held up the advancing Chinese. But rescue parties discovered after the Chinese withdrawal on November 21 that not a single shell had been fired by the tanks. Their gun barrels still contained grease.

Between November 17 and 18 the Chinese overwhelmed the 62 Brigade under Hoshiar Singh at Se La. The brigadier was killed and the Chinese later said that they had buried him with full military honours. The Divisional HQ at Darang Zong and the 48 Brigade at Bomdi La were also steamrollered by the enemy. They made rapid advances towards Rupa and Chako and Foothills. The 5 Division was sent to check their advance. It had been rushed to NEFA straight from the plains of Punjab. It was here that Kaul and two American correspondents nearly fell into the hands of the Chinese.

The news coming to Rashtrapati Bhavan between November 9 and 21 was confusing. Events were moving so rapidly that it was not possible to gauge political reactions beyond the fact that the Government seemed reconciled to the worst. On November 14, when Nehru was making a statement in Parliament, the President lay on his bed in dhoti and kurta listening to it through the microphones installed in the room. There was an ironic gleam in his eye as he heard Nehru say: "Gen Kaul is one of our bravest officers.... At the time India became independent we were not apprehensive about any country's aggressive designs on us. We had to make a hard choice between guns and butter.... India is not conditioned to war...." The President chuckled and said: "Look what this man is talking about."

The atmosphere in the House was gloomy. As evening set in and the shadows in the Moghul Gardens grew longer

the President, escorted by an ADC, would walk in them. He would sometimes ask: "What do the people think about Nehru? Hasn't his prestige gone down? Aren't they thinking of replacing the Government?" Sometimes Dr Gopal joined his father and they would converse in Telugu. I got the impression that a war council comprising some retired generals and headed by the President was to be formed. Nehru and Menon were to be asked to resign and go among the people and restore their confidence in the destiny of the nation, which they had jeopardized.

The Soviet Union was showing concern at our attitude to happenings in Cuba from October 20 to 26. There, in the face of President Kennedy's toughness, Soviet Prime Minister Khrushchev had withdrawn his missiles. Nehru was making statements about the affair which the Russians felt were not favourable to them.

Gen Kaul was relieved of the command of the 4 Corps on November 28. Gen Thapar and Menon had already lost their positions on November 18. Bomdi La fell on November 20. The following day the new Chief of Staff, Gen J.N. Chaudhuri, came to see the President just after the Chinese announced their unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal. He came out of the meeting smiling. As he was about to get into the lift he gave me a folded piece of paper, and said: "Oh, I forgot to give this to the old man. Please give it to him." When I took the paper he said: "Read it." I did so as the lift descended. It was a retirement order served on Chaudhuri by Gen Moti Sagar. It said he was due to retire on May 15, 1963. If he wanted six months leave before retiring he should apply for it. It was actually Kaul who retired on this date.

A few days before Chaudhuri took over the President made discreet inquiries about Lt-Gen Kumaramangalam's popularity with the troops. The same day Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman and Nation*, saw the President. While

leaving he recalled an interview with Nehru in June 1953 in *London Forum* a regular feature of the British Broadcasting Corporation. He had asked Nehru about the Chinese menace on the Indian border. Nehru answered that the Chinese had enough domestic problems to monopolize their attention. India had the friendliest relations possible with China and it was completely wrong to think they would attack this country, he said.

Martin asked me: "What will you do now as the Chinese have declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal? Will the Indian Army follow them till they are driven out" I asked him in turn: "What would you do, sir, if you were in our place?" He answered: "I would not pursue them.."

This was a very controversial issue. Many Indian and foreign brass hats, including Gen Adams, head of the American military mission, felt we should not accept the ceasefire. They thought we should give chase to the Chinese, with or without foreign aid, but preferably with it. Their reasoning was based on these arguments:

(1) Winter had set in and the Chinese lines of communication were too extended.

(2) We had already obtained some help from the West, and units of the US Air Force were at hand to provide air support to our ground forces.

(3) We would restore the confidence of the smaller nations which looked up to and depended upon India against the growing power of China.

(4) We would have regained the areas we had lost to China through our own efforts.

(5) The prestige of the Nehru Government, which had sunk very low, would rise again both at home and abroad.

(6) The political differences between China and the Soviet Union were sharpening and we could have looked to Moscow for moral and material support.

(7) We would have been able to negotiate with the Chinese from a position of strength.

(8) We would have been, in Nehru's words, conditioned for any conflict that might arise in the future.

The Chinese intrusions among other things were intended to throw the Indian economy out of gear and bring about the downfall of Nehru. They achieved the first of these aims and nearly achieved the second. It was because he would be doing what the Chinese wanted him to do that Nehru refused to resign when urged to do so. His resignation would have meant conceding total victory to Peking's big-power designs, which involved domination of underdeveloped Asia and Africa.

Ambassador Galbraith was now almost a daily caller on the President. On November 15 he made an unannounced call at 11.30 p.m., thereby breaking all rules of protocol. The President received him in his study. As soon as he entered Galbraith said: "Ayub is the best man on your side." The discussion that night is believed to have hinged on coming to terms with Pakistan on Kashmir. Although under pressure from the Western powers not to embarrass Nehru further in his hour of crisis Ayub had been unable or was unwilling to suppress the popular agitation in Pakistan, especially among the inhabitants of "Azad Kashmir" to march on Srinagar. The meeting lasted two hours. In a letter to President Kennedy later Ayub referred to the demand that he march into the Kashmir valley. He said India had withdrawn a division from Jammu but had moved an armoured division into Punjab. So the power balance remained where it had been. He warned the Americans that they were dealing with a country which had a "long history of broken pledges."

When the Indian Army had taken a pummelling from the Chinese was obviously the right time for Pakistan to attempt to grab Kashmir. This was also a time for India to stall such a move by holding talks with Pakistan. Accordingly four rounds of talks between Swaran Singh and Bhutto followed the ceasefire. Till then our stand on Kashmir was that no

problem existed as a solution had already been found for it. But here were we now showing a readiness apparently to reopen the issue. The Russians, who had supported steadfastly our claims to Kashmir in the United Nations and outside it, raised their eyebrows in displeasure. Benediktov called on the President frequently and told him on one occasion: "We may have to revise our policy and thinking on Kashmir if you are going to discuss it with Pakistan." The Soviet leaders believed we were doing this as the price for Western arms.

At the time of the fighting with China there was, as mentioned before, much talk in high political circles of forming a war council under the President, who would assume supreme power. But there was scarcely any evidence to show that before the clash took place the President, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, had tried to persuade the Government that the defence set-up should be modernized to meet any threat of foreign aggression. Even as supreme commander he acted only on the advice of his Council of Ministers. In his messages to the nation through Parliament he made little mention of the armed forces.

Therefore, even in his address to Parliament, the President welcomed the emergence of Mao's regime, though we did voice our concern on preserving the autonomy of Tibet, when China undertook military action there. Next time we concerned ourselves with China when India signed a treaty, in 1954, on Tibet.

In the same strain, the President as the supreme commander of the Indian armed forces did not effectively function as such. He did nothing more, except dittoing what the Government put forward to him for signatures. In the two wars that the nation faced beside making exasperated remarks the Presidents found themselves powerless. They never emphasized the need for modernizing the services into a first-class fighting machine. To defend 370 citizens per square mile

armed forces constituted only 001 per cent of the population of the country. They were armed with antiquated weapons and were based upon ancient organizational techniques. Starting from 1950 to 1962, Presidents talked about armed forces only on three occasions during the address to Parliament, i.e. 1950, 1951, and 1952. These talks never enlightened the nation on the progress being made to defend the country. But all these addresses dwelt largely upon Korea, admission of China to the UN, aparthied in South Africa, Indo-Pak problems, futility of military pacts, food problem (where the Damodar valley project, Bhakra dam, Hirakud dam, irrigation and hydro-electric power projects were discussed), Indonesia, foreign visits made by the Prime Minister and the President, 5-year plans, community projects and securing of foreign aid, etc.

A visitor to New Delhi at the time the Colombo powers made their peace proposals was Wg-Cdr Ali Sabry of the United Arab Republic. He came as President Nasser's personal envoy. In their speeches at a banquet in his honour the President and the Prime Minister recounted India's support to the UAR in the Suez crisis and the close ties existing between the people of the two countries. They hinted at the grave difficulty India was placed in as a result of the dispute with China and sought the sympathy of the Egyptians. Sabry made no reference in his reply to the India-Chine dispute but thanked India for cooperating with his country in the past. The President was obviously disappointed at the omission in Sabry's speech. He remarked later that "gratitude in international politics is very rare."

In July 1963 another effort was made to persuade Nehru to step down from the top spot in the Cabinet. This was the Kamaraj Plan sponsored by the president of the Congress Party. Kamaraj proposed that all the leading members of the Government, including Nehru, should resign and go among the people and restore their confidence, shattered by

the Chinese victory. Before the plan was placed before the Congress leaders by Kamaraj long talks took place between Radhakrishnan and him at Rashtrapati Nilayam in Hyderabad. The two walked till late in the evening on the lawns attached to this building discussing the proposal.

The President cut short his stay in the South and returned to New Delhi early in August. The Congress Working Committee met to discuss Kamaraj's plan at the Prime Minister's House. The meeting lasted far into the night. Meanwhile, at Rashtrapati Bhavan the President paced up and down in his study and bedroom waiting for the expected news that Nehru had agreed to retire. When the news of the Working Committee's decision finally arrived it was a shock to the President. The "Kamaraj axe" had bounced. Nehru had seen through the game. He had used the proposals to purg his Cabinet of those he suspected of wanting to step into his shoes or of disloyalty. Among those whose heads rolled were Dr Shrimali, B. Gopala Reddi and Shastri, all three favourites of the President.

Jottings

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole.
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

12

During my sojourn at Rashtrapati Bhavan I maintained a diary to record the events, both important and trivial, I was witness to and in which I played on occasions a small part. I reproduce here some of the jottings I made in 1962, covering the period leading up to the armed clash with China and the weeks immediately after it.

August 17: In Parliament Nehru described the dispute between India and China as a game of military chess. India received the seventh note from China. It said China rejected arbitration. Marshal Chen Yi, China's Defence Minister, said in Geneva: "No force in the world can oblige us to withdraw." After his talks with Menon at the Palais des Nations it became clear that China wanted eastern Ladakh. Nehru and Menon were trying to soften public opinion to agree to at least a part of this demand. Nehru told Parliament recently that "not a blade of grass grows in that wilderness." He has declared that he is willing to make small territorial adjustments. Menon is being criticized for meeting Chen Yi.

September 20: The 1 Battalion of the Brigade of Guards was presented with the President's colours. The ceremony went off very well. Lt-Col J.N. Patel was in command of the parade. Rain fell just before the first bugle, drenching the walls of Red Fort, washing away their blemishes and restoring some of the glow of the colourful era of Shah Jahan. In the foreground stood the regiment to receive its colours from its Colonel-in-Chief. It fell to smart young Capt Harkirat (Harry) Singh to receive the new colours and to Capt Subhash Chander (Bunty) Vig to march off the old colours and lay them to rest.

The Military Attache of the British High Commission, who witnessed the ceremony, said: "It could go off as a training film for colour presentation." Gen Cariappa asked the President whether the parade was not worth being proud of. The President nodded.

Later the same day, while sipping Scotch at the bar of the battalion mess, Brig Navin Rawlley said: "The Brigade

of Guards must get blood on their uniforms now." He was commanding the 11 Brigade in the Walong sector in NEFA. On that day Brig Dalvi, also from the Brigade of Guards, was conferring at Dho La post with Lt-Col Misra, OC 9 Punjab, on whether a battalion should go into attack against the Chinese who were two companies strong. The Chinese had brought heavy fire on the post, AHQ reported.

September 22: The President attended the dinner of the 1 Battalion Brigade of Guards Mess at Red Fort. Before setting out from the House he pinned the Garuda badge of the Guards on the left breast of his achkan.

Press Trust of India reported the India-China border alive with military activity. AHQ confirmed the report. Steady fire was exchanged by the 1 Battalion of the 9 Gurkha Rifles and the Chinese at Dho La. Brig Dalvi's 7 Brigade was involved.

The Chinese protested that on September 20 Indian forces fired on a patrol near Shipki La on their side of the border.

September 23: Attended a cocktail party at the American Embassy. There was a reference to the longest space flight undertaken by man. Popovich and Nokolaev made 48 and 64 orbits respectively.

September 24: An unconfirmed report quotes Radio Peking as saying that we had launched a battalion attack on September 22. The 9 Punjab near Bridge 1 were involved and the Chinese casualties included 10 dead.

Dr Gopal asked: "Is Brig Dalvi a capable commander?"

September 29: The Prime Minister left for Cairo. I saw him off on behalf of the President.

September 30: Forming a corps in NEFA is imminent. Gen Kaul is on leave. His name is mentioned as its commander but people at the top are raising their eyebrows. Menon probably does not approve of him. Kaul flew into Delhi today. *Time* magazine is building him up. "He needs battle experience," the President said. "This is a costly game."

This would only infuriate the Chinese, who may bomb our cities. Such action may make us jump into the Western lap.

October 16: We hear rumours of Dalvi's resignation. The President says, "I don't believe that man," meaning Kaul. "He sounds hollow." Kaul had seen him that morning. Poor Dalvi is up against odds on both sides. He and his troops feel they are being sacrificed.

The troops in the 7 Brigade belong to the 1 Battalion 9 Gurkha Rifles, the 2 Rajputs and the 9 Punjab. Let us wait and pray.

Nehru orders Menon and Thapar to report back their observations at the front.

October 17: Kaul sent a signal to the President. Galbraith was with the President for two hours. Coming down in the lift, he said to me: "You have a brave man in Gen Kaul, don't you?"

October 18: Soviet Ambassador Benediktov was with the President for 2½ hours. They came out of the presidential study looking grim.

October 19: A rumour that a Chinese plane was over Delhi this morning. Tension in the air. The President remained indoors and studied maps. Curiously, our map shows Dho La post in Chinese territory. "We are in for a bad phase," the President remarked.

October 20: An uneasy quiet in the House. The PM came. The President stayed indoors. Thapar was out of Delhi. We hear firing has taken place in Ladakh.

October 21: It has happened. The Chinese carried out massive attacks in NEFA and Ladakh. The Indian Army withdrew at all points. We hear the Chinese sustained heavy casualties. They overwhelmed the 7 Brigade. The fate of its commander is not known. The 9 Punjab and the 9 GR surrounded. The Chinese crossed between the 3 and 4 Brigades and hit the 7 Brigade HQ while another force mopped up the defending troops in the front line.

October 22: Heavy fighting in the Walong sector. Rawl-

ley is the 11 Brigade commander. It consists of the 6 Kumaon, the 3/3 GR and the 4 Sikhs. Rawlley's ambition will now be realized. His Guards uniform will now be christened. It is reported that his men have repulsed a Chinese attack and withdrawn according to plan.

The morale of the troops is high. When the Chinese attacked in Kibots, in Lohit Frontier Division, Naik Bahadur Singh of the Kumaon's singlehanded held out against a group of Chinese supported by MMGs.

Kaul is still sick in Delhi. Lt-Gen Harbaksh Singh is officiating as commander of the 4 Corps.

We are soliciting support from all the Afro-Asian countries. The Chinese have lowered our prestige among the smaller nations. "What must be their opinion of us?" the President asked.

Sirijap post in Ladakh loses contact with its base. Possibly annihilated.

In the Walong sector the Gurkha Battalion HQ are overrun by the Chinese. The fate of its commander is not known. Maj Srikant is said to have held on with great grit with a few men.

October 23: Thapar briefed the Cabinet and other members of the Government, including state Governors, in the Cabinet Room. Maps from Army HQ were brought in. Thapar briefly said the Chinese were six footers from North China and had overwhelmed the 7 Brigade on the night of October 19. Reports from the corps commander did not give an encouraging picture of the way our men had fought. Kaul had very correctly estimated the strength of the enemy on his last recce. He had told Dalvi not to sit on the river line as he was too thin on the ground and this was also tactically unsound. But Dalvi had not heeded this advice and had put up a poor show. Hearing this filled me with disgust. Here was the Army Chief letting down a brigade Commander before the highest political body. What chance for a junior officer?

Mr Mehdi Nawaz Jung, Governor of Gujarat, asked

"Why have we been brought to this humiliating position?" Thapar said that time and again the Army had warned the Government about the Chinese menace on the borders, the military implications of this and our state of unpreparedness. The Army asked for 7.62 rifles for the infantry. It had also questioned the wisdom of spending Rs 40 crores on an aircraft carrier when the Army's entire fleet of trucks could have been overhauled for Rs 18 crores.

Thapar looked at Nehru, who sat still with heavy lidded eyes. Menon got up and spoke in a hoarse voice. He said: "We wanted to make our weapons indigenously. For example, the manufacture of Brandt mortars was being negotiated, but it fell through among other things on the refusal of the Finance Ministry to grant foreign exchange."

Morarji Desai angrily interjected: "You could have come to me if India's defence was at stake. You have been surrendering Rs 40 crores for the last five years as unspent budget." Desai got up and went towards the window muttering something about "traitors."

The atmosphere was tense. Nehru restored calm with an appeal that everybody should be "realistic." Two Governors asked what was to be done now. Thapar said: "We must make peace at any cost. We cannot fight them. They can come to Tezpur, they can come to Calcutta. The Indian Army can be prepared only for a defensive action. We will have to at least double its strength and this will take about three to four years and cost about Rs 500 crores."

The meeting adjourned with tempers strained and bitterness on all sides. Gen Thimayya, a member of the Defence Council, was waiting in the ADC room to see the President. He stood up as Nehru passed with head drooping. Thimayya looked at me and said with a smile: "This young man has really gone old now."

An informal discussion took place among some members of the Council in the passage near the same room on the role of the Navy in protecting India's maritime trade on the

should meet either in Peking or in Delhi.

Nehru is supposed to have seen Kaul secretly on the night of October 23 in his house, where he lay sick. Kaul is supposed to have given him his revised appreciation of Chinese strength and intentions in NEFA. Nehru's illusions about the possibility of holding back the Chinese have been shattered. "Did I not tell you it would be a costly operation?" Radhakrishnan said with a chuckle as he had a quiet walk in the Moghul Gardens with Nehru. It appears that Nehru had been led to believe that the formation of "task force" would enable India to win a minor victory, badly needed to boost the sagging political morale of the Congress Party.

The heat is on Menon. The aim of this exercise seems to be to see that this scapegoat does not get away.

We hear about the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in Cuba and that Khrushchev bowed to Washington in the interests of world peace. "Statesmanlike," the President remarked.

Gen Harbaksh Singh acts for Kaul. Every inch a general, he is very popular with the troops.

October 25: Tawang falls to the Chinese. Nehru in constant touch with Kaul. He seems to be telling Kaul: "You egged me on to make a statement. Now you honour my words at any cost." Kaul is believed to have suggested seeking foreign military aid. The President's reaction is: "But can't we do without foreigners coming to our rescue? What has happened to the vaunted 4 Indian Division? But how can the troops fight if their leaders do not lead them? Battles are won by stouthearted men."

I feel a wedge is being created between officers and men. This is disheartening. Nobody seems to realize the disparity between the .303 and 7.62 rifles, leaving aside more sophisticated equipment. The picture is dismal.

October 26: The President declares a state of emergency. The Defence of India Ordinance is promulgated.

Nehru issued a statement on Cuba. Radhakrishnan com-

mented: "Let us not bother about the rest of the world. Let us be national for a while and cease being international."

It is said that at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party today Nehru was pressed to sack Menon. Nehru replied that as Prime Minister he was responsible for the failures of his Government. If anybody had to resign he should. A senior Congressman reportedly got up and said: "We are prepared for this too."

October 27: Tunku Abdul Rehman, Prime Minister of Malaya, arrives. He declares unequivocal support for India against China.

Benediktov called on the President. We were warned that he understood English perfectly and we should not therefore discuss anything in that language within earshot of him.

October 29: Canadian High Commissioner Chester Roumming calls on the President and pledges his Government's help to India.

Kaul is going back to NEFA to take command of the 4 Corps once again.

November 2: President Ayub Khan's letter to Kennedy seems to have the underlying theme "the enemy of my enemy is my friend. You do not have to have anything in common." The gist of the letter was conveyed to Radhakrishnan by Galbraith. It said that India deserved to be in the plight the Chinese had brought about. Ayub accused Kennedy of not allowing him to take advantage of this plight to grab Kashmir.

Opinions differed on whether Pakistan could have grabbed Kashmir at this juncture. There was not a single Indian soldier on the ceasefire line and all the infantry divisions in the region were being pulled out. Many believed that Pakistan could have wrested the valley from India with a blitzkrieg. Whether the USA would have curbed Pakistan was debatable.

November 4: Brig Dalvi is supposed to have come back injured to Delhi. We searched all the hospitals, but it was only a rumour. The same evening the Chinese announced

they had captured him on October 22.

November 7: Menon resigns after a great deal of pressure. Nehru fought a last-ditch battle to save him. He even offered again to resign himself, but these tactics also failed to save the Defence Minister.

The 62 Brigade assumes shape under Brig Hoshiar Singh about 24 miles south of Tawang. He has the reputation of being a tough commander who does not lose his nerve in a crisis. Harbaksh Singh had appeared in this defensive position a few days earlier. The troops greeted him with "We will take on the Chinese now."

November 8: Menon haunts everybody in a high position in Delhi. Every fiasco must have a scapegoat. Students of military history know that scores of corps were written off in the Middle East in the Second World War and in Korea in 1953. Generals have been killed with their troops or been defeated and captured. Kaul, Thimayya or Napoleon would have met the same fate. This is the general trend of the President's reactions.

November 9: Thimayya saw the President. Trying to hold Se La is a mistake. Tawang should have been held. The Chinese Military Attache gave me a pamphlet on Nehru's visit to China. He had come to see an emissary of one of the Colombo powers who was staying at the House.

November 10: Chief Minister Y.B. Chavan of Maharashtra is strongly tipped as the next Defence Minister. Mrs Pandit remarked: "I don't know why Brother wants to make him Defence Minister." Other names rumoured are Cariappa and Thimayya.

The tirade against the Army continues. High-ups say: "The Army is being defeated as it is not led properly."

November 13/14: Under heavy fire from the Opposition in Parliament the Government resolves to drive the Chinese from Indian soil. The President is amused. He says: "They won't be able to do so in centuries the way they are going on."

November 16: The President complained to the Defence Minister about the newspapers giving details of the defence set-up at Se La. He said: "They don't have to employ intelligence at all. We are informing the enemy about what we are doing every time."

We continue to get reports that Hoshiar Singh will turn the tide of defeat.

Kaul rang the President at night to suggest that the Government ask its Western sympathizers for air support. Initially, he said, our Air Force will give tactical support to our ground troops. We should keep the Americans informed of developments in the battle area, and if the war escalated an air umbrella of at least five squadrons should be at hand.

We learnt later that in the event of the Anglo-American bloc agreeing to provide an umbrella the British would give the fighting component and the Americans logistical requirements, radar and communications. Exercise Shiksha carried out some months later by a joint Anglo-American command found that our air bases were not sited to counter tactically an air strike over the Himalayas from Kunming and Sinkiang.

November 17/18: Why is Kaul keeping close to the 11 Brigade in the Walong sector? I remember he once commanded this outfit. I wish he was at his headquarters directing operations in all sectors rather than concentrating on one and not bothering about the others. Brig Rawlley is quite capable of taking whatever action is demanded. At Army HQ his stock is high.

Se La is said to have been assailed by Chinese forces of more than brigade strength. This report is not confirmed, as another says the enemy has bypassed this strongpoint. Reports from NEFA are contradictory and confusing. Divisional HQ at Darang Zong are silent. Gloom fills the House. Responsible people say: "What did we prepare these defences for if we are not going to stick to them?" We hear that Divisional Commander Pathania has left no orders for the brigade at Se La for withdrawal or other action. Are we

going to make a fight of it or not?

The Government is approaching the USA for an air strike on the advancing Chinese. They have hit Se La, Darang Zong and Bomdi La simultaneously. Very well timed. Roadblocks have been set up everywhere and the withdrawal of the 62 Brigade, 4 Division HQ and 48 Brigade cut off. In making a request for Anglo-American air support it has been explained that our Air Force is not conditioned for operations at high altitudes. Although we had warnings from the Army authorities as far back as 1955 about the Chinese military build-up, including siting of tactical air bases in Tibet, our Air Force has never been reshaped or included in planning for high-altitude operations. Gen Lentaigne who was associated with Gen Wingate in the Chindet operations in Burma in World War II, categorically said in an address to the students of the Staff College when he was its Commandant: "You chaps will have to fight the Chinese one day. Advance planning for any eventuality and taking the services into confidence are extremely important."

The proceedings of the Defence Council today were along these lines. It was made very clear that the Air Force must be consistently modernized so that it keeps abreast of the advance of technology.

November 19: Se La falls. The brigade withdraws in confusion. No orders went out from 4 Division HQ to Hoshiar Singh. His fate is unknown. The President is told that everybody in the brigade acted on his own as no definite orders for withdrawal were received. The President asks: "What happened to your 4 Indian Division?"

Walong has met the same fate. Rawlley fought well. He attempted to conduct his withdrawal operation according to the book. He was the last to leave. Kaul was with him.

Bomdi La falls. The 48 Brigade disperses. The 5 Guards, 1 Sikh LI and 1 Madras make their own way back to safety in the direction of Tezpur. "Oh, your Guards didn't fight," somebody says to me.

This battalion was only 2 years old like many other battalions of the Indian army but with very distinct features. It had no one class composition. It was thoroughly mixed. Truly secularly integrated in nature, it broke the old myth of one class composition being better than a mixed class. Against 90 killed the number of the Chinese killed at Thembang was over 600. This figure is testified by local and political officer at Bomdi La. This battalion delivered goods against heavy odds. If this battalion had been given replenishment of Mortor ammunition it would have held the ground much longer. Probably the question of withdrawal from Thembang would not have occured at all. Maybe the fate of Bomdi La would have been different in that case.

But this battalion was maligned at the highest quarters as having abandoned the position without a fight.

A thorough enquiry in its affairs revealed that due to the defensive action of this battalion the complete Chinese force attacking Bomdi La suffered more than 600 killed and even some of the troops mutined. The entire force had to be reorganized to carry on their furtner advance.

The President is in Poona after visiting Kolhapur. The GOC-in-C, Southern Command, is Lt-Gen Chaudhuri. The Military Secretary has been trying to get Gen Thapar to brief the President on the latest developments in the border areas. But somehow this could not be arranged. It was learnt that Chinese were moving in and out of Bomdi La. Chaudhuri was asked to acquaint the President with the situation on a sand model in Poona. The briefing was detailed and included the historical background of the clash. Chaudhuri conveyed to the President that had he been in Thapar's place the mistakes Thapar made would have been avoided. He also gave the impression that these mistakes were very grave and that no professional soldier with even an elementary knowledge of the act of war battle tactics would have perpetrated them. The President seemed impressed. While the President and his party were walking from the car that took them to

Lohaegaon airfield to the plane that was to take them back to Delhi the Military Secretary was overheard telling Chaudhuri that his briefing was eloquent of disloyalty to his chief. Chaudhuri brushed aside the criticism with a disdainful shake of his head.

Prior to this briefing the turn of events in NEFA had lowered Thapar's stock considerably in the eyes of the Supreme Commander. The inadequacies in planning and shortage of equipment of the 4 Division were quite apparent and were held as major causes of our defeat. The belief that battles are won by stouthearted people given elementary tools and looked after logistically was gaining ground in the mind of the President. The secret mailbag arrived from Delhi the same day and contained a telegram from Kaul that the new American rifles had reached the front, but without ammunition and were therefore useless. The comment in the presidential party was: "See, this is what Thapar is doing. How can he expect jawans to fight without ammunition?" The Military Secretary later regretted having put up Kaul's telegram to the President as soon as it arrived. It speeded up Thapar's exist and Chaudhuri's taking over as Chief of Staff. The Military Secretary's sympathies lay with Thapar.

When we returned to Delhi, Thapar was summoned to Rashtrapati Bhavan. He was out of station. Feelers went out to him from the politicians advising him to resign. He was told that this would only be a gesture. He would be assured of a place in history because of this honourable act and his resignation would not be accepted. But this was merely a ruse. He handed in his resignation after two pegs of Scotch and the decision was conveyed to the Prime Minister. The resignation was accepted.

Chaudhuri informed the Military Secretary by telephone that Brig Lall had been posted as Surgeon to the President in place of Col Maitra. The Military Secretary said this posting was not to take place as the President did not approve of it. Chaudhuri had acted on his own and the posting was therefore in-

valid. Lall was attending on Chaudhuri in Poona and had treated him for a heart ailment. The suspicion was strong that Lall was being planted at Rashtrapati Bhavan for obvious reasons. As the President was firm in resisting the change he landed up in the medical inspection room at Army HQ.

November 21: Chaudhuri took over as Chief of Staff. The Chinese announced a unilateral withdrawal. The Government was taken by surprise. It was convinced that the Chinese were preparing for full-scale war on India. The President remarked: "They came into our house, slapped us and have gone back."

November 23: Chaudhuri gave a resume of the fighting to Army officers in Delhi. He said the action in Ladakh had been well fought. The withdrawal in the Lohit Frontier Division and the Walong sector had been commendable and there were no regrets. But in the other sectors in NEFA there had been a complete snarl.

November 26: President Luebke arrives. Britain assures arms to India. Macmillan very sweet about the whole deal. The Defence Council today discussed why the Government did not act on the recommendations of various experts for tightening up our border defences. The President told us an interesting anecdote in private. The wife of a British regent was pregnant and a month overdue. Her life was in danger. She was afraid of an operation. Her husband had tried every medicine and source of allopathy. He was told to try a quack on the outskirts of Vellore. The regent sent for this man, who refused to come. He said: "If the regent needs me desparately he will come himself." Finally the regent and his wife had to knock on the door of the quack. The man accepted the case on condition the pregnant woman consented to do exactly as he told her. He first sent the regent away. Then he asked his wife to enter a room with him. He ordered her to close the door, take her clothes off and lie on a charpoy. Looking steadily at her, the quack picked up a stick lying in a corner and advanced menacingly towards her. As

he neared the charopy he stared straight into her eyes and banged the stick on the cot. The regent's wife delivered. "This," he said at the end of his story, "is how a government delivers the goods. Damn it, use the stick."

December 20: Talks on Kashmir begin at Rawalpindi between India and Pakistan. Pakistan announces an agreement with China on the border.

December 31: Nehru congratulates Kennedy and Khrushchev on coming to terms on Cuba.

A very interesting discussion took place at the Ministry of Defence. There has been a growing feeling that the Army, if made powerful, would be a force which could challenge the Government. Therefore endeavours have been made to create parallel organizations like paramilitary forces which will be allotted tremendous funds for build up.

Our armed forces also were not devoid of betrayers. We are told of an interesting incident. A car somewhere in the diplomatic enclave neared a bend. A grey-haired man in middle age got out and entered the other car. The car proceeded towards a foreign embassy.

"The information that I gave is incorrect. On your raising the price to one lakh, I shall give you the correct one," the grey-haired man said. "Let us talk to the Chief," the other replied. The iron gates of a bungalow near Hardinge Bridge closed as the car crawled in. Half an hour later a dejected-looking senior Indian officer came out on foot and was arrested. "Chief" had rung up the Intelligence Bureau after "getting wise."

The country had been sold. The two budding young Air Force Officers probably are still nursing their wounds.

A Neighbourly Act

When I remember all
The friends so linked together
I have seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather
I feel like one who treads alone.

13

I saw the President in 1965, less than two years after I relinquished my appointment on his staff. We discussed the outstanding military events of the war with Pakistan. We talked about the 1 Armoured Division's onslaught in the Sialkot sector. The division had one Sherman regiment while the rest were equipped with Centurions. The Israelis had changed completely the gun turrets of their Sherman tanks in the Sinai campaign in 1956, but our experts wanted to score over the Israelis by replacing the existing guns on the Shermans with French AMX-12 guns, with the result that the turrets cracked and the crews had to get down and rotate the gun barrels towards the enemy whenever they pointed at our own troops or in a different direction. This regiment was ultimately shifted to defensive operations and the attack was led by three Centurion regiments. The information about the enemy was that they had only four regiments in the Phillaura sector and around Sialkot.

Gen Chaudhuri's own regiment, the 16 Cavalry, led the attack and was bogged down at the first opposition it encountered. A regiment of Pakistan's 6 Division engaged it. The usual armour tactics were adopted and the 17 Poona Horse was sent to outflank the enemy. The 16 Cavalry reported that it had been engaged by the enemy from the rear as well as front. This seemed impossible and Hodson's Horse were sent on a wider outflanking move from the left. An hour and a half later they were also engaged from front and rear. The enemy, it was presumed, had outflanked our troops and had six regiments in action instead of four as we had calculated earlier. Ultimately when the smokescreen lifted it was discovered that we had engaged our own troops from the rear The 17 Poona Horse had engaged the 16 Cavalry and Hodson's Horse in turn had engaged the Poona Horse. The division between bravery and cowardice being thin the commander of the 16 Cavalry was sacked and the 17 Poona Horse got the Param Vir Chakra. Two days later two Pakistani tank regiments were caught in harbour and shot up at Phillaura. The

casualties were nearly 70 Pattons.

In a different theatre Chaudhuri at a corps headquarters had ordered the evacuation of Amritsar. Harbaksh Singh, GOC-in-C, Western Command, had put his foot down saying: "Amritsar will not be vacated as I am winning." It was said that Chaudhuri had asked the Government to order the evacuation of the city. This news reached the President and he passed it on to Shastri. Amritsar was not vacated.

The link-up of Pasrur was achieved. Due to the debacle of Dehra Baba Nanak bridge, which was destroyed before we could secure it, the advance of the Indian Army was held up.

As the President, lying at ease in a teak-panelled bedroom at Raj Bhavan, Poona, was talking I had a flashback of the entire conflict, starting with August 5, when somewhere in Gulmarg my brother Sudarshan's artillery unit fired the first salvo of the war on Pakistani infiltrators in the Gulmarg sector, and going up to the engagement in the Haji Pir pass, our strike across the international border, and the ceasefire at midnight on September 23.

The President asked me with a smile: "Tell me, why didn't we take Lahore?" I replied: "You should be telling me that, Sir. I don't know." He smiled again and added: "All tell me wrong things. I asked Air Marshal Arjan Singh what was the truth about the para drops over Delhi and the shooting up of planes on September 17. He shrugged his shoulders and said this was a mere figment of imagination."

The President continued: "Nasser asked me when I was at Cairo airport on my way back from Ethiopia: 'Why didn't you take Lahore? We were all waiting to hear this news.' "

The President slipped another cashewnut into his mouth from the bowl that lay between us with the tea things. He said as he munched it: "You know I hate hiding the truth, and I just couldn't tell him that they fought like tigers across

the Ichhogil canal. Everybody wants the truth to be on his side. But how many are on the side of truth?"

The President was also told about a distressing incident. The military hospitals were full of casualties. The Prime Minister's visit to the wounded was greatly appreciated. A young captain's eyes lit up as the sweet voice of the Prime Minister inquired about his health. The captain replied that after three years of service he had lost a leg. What was his future, he asked. How would he earn and assure his family of two meals a day? The Prime Minister told him gently to write to his secretariat giving all the facts. The highpowered escort hurried him away from the wounded man's bed, assuring him on the way that they would look after his needs.

The Prime Minister had barely left when the second most important member of his party showed up again at the captain's bedside. "How dare you speak to the Prime Minister like that?" The VIP was told later that the loss of his leg had affected the captain mentally. Hence his outburst.

While President Radhakrishnan was musing over the happenings of Indo-Pak war, I was reminded of what he had expressed off and on about the country, the Government and our foreign relations. "Fifteen years ago, at the time of independence, decolonized, confident, we extended the hand of friendship to everyone. What are our relations with the three major powers—the USA, the USSR and China—and other powers like Japan and Germany? Besides economic and military help, with some sort of political strings attached, Indo-American relations are, in a nutshell, based upon the generosity and the broad-mindedness of uncle Sam. We do take the liberty of criticizing their actions in Vietnam, without realizing that they are fighting our wars there. With the USSR our relations are just cordial. Besides their support on the Kashmir issue which is now dwindling

we only have a lip sympathy from them in our hour of need, particularly at the time when the Chinese forces advanced relentlessly into India. With China, the relations are at its worst. We play to the Chinese tunes. A Chinese shell in Nathula pass brings our whole economy to a standstill. Relations with Germany, Japan and Britain are at the level of mutual bargaining. We cannot look forward for help from Britain in time of dire need. So far as Germany and France are concerned, the financial tycoons are apprehensive to invest either in collaboration with the Government or with business houses. Foreign capital feels shy to invest money in this country.

"Our professed solidarity with other Asian and African countries has been only one-sided. The other countries have never reciprocated our friendliness in full measure. Ever since Nehru's advances towards Brioni powers (India, the UAR, and Yugoslavia), no substantial gains have been made by India which could mark the success of foreign policy. Pakistan has always cast a shadow on our dealings with Muslim countries.

"Projection of our image abroad lacks in substance and effort. Except Malaya, not a single country came to our help at the time of crisis.

"Our much talked about friendly relations with countries were tested when India faced trouble on its borders. We wanted to be friendly with the whole world and not with one section of it, thus landing with no allies at all.

"One single onslaught of a foreign country on our soil sent us abegging abroad not only for arms but also for alms. We never found unity in the true sense even during this crisis. We searched for scapegoats. The real 'goats' escaped.

"The real culprits were the vast majority of the *jee hazurs*. They drew wool over the eyes of those in power to actualities. When the realities became too vivid, the courage of conviction and the character to own up a mistake were lacking barring

for a few. We built up tremendous propaganda clouds around and against people who failed to discharge their duties."

The President put yet another cashewnut into his mouth.

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Here are flesh and blood disclosures that only an ADC to the President could know. Under Major Datta's shrewd gaze the glittering masks of big-wigs at Rashtrapati Bhawan are stripped bare.

WITH TWO PRESIDENTS

"A SCORE OF SPICY ANECDOTES INTERESTING FROM TOP TO BOTTOM"

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